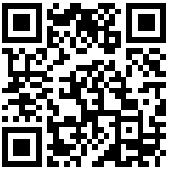
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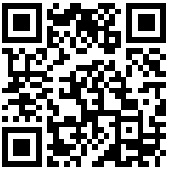
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THE NOVELLINO

OF

Masuccio

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE FIRST

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"Meat without Mustard."

FROM A PAINTING BY E. R. HUGHES.

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The Novellino

OF

Masuccio

NOW FIRST TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

By W. G. WATERS

VOLUME I



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Introduction

THE middle period of the fifteenth century is one which every writer on Italian history or literature will approach with interest or even delight. It is probably at the present time being worked more zealously and more studiously than any other; wherefore it would be out of place to set down here any vague generalities concerning it. Pope Paul IV., speaking a century later,* compared the ruin and confusion of his own age with the states system which produced rulers like Francesco Sforza, Cosimo dei Medici, Francesco Foscari, Nicolas V., and Alfonso the Magnanimous, and likened the Italy of the time to a well-tuned musical instrument and the states of the aforenamed rulers to the strings thereof, cursing the while the memory of Alfonso of Aragon† and Ludovico of Milan, wretched lost souls who had disturbed this harmony and compassed the ruin he was fated to behold! These good times of the Pope's retrospect may be roughly identified with the period of Masuccio's literary activity, and the people who then lived and moved in town and country, as the originals of the interesting series of literary pictures which he has left us in his work.

The "Novellino" is a collection of fifty stories, each one told by the writer separately, without any striving after continuity. Masuccio does not trouble himself, like certain others of the Novellieri, to construct a setting for his work, and to feign that the tales are told in turn by the various members of a gentle company brought together by hazard. He tells us that all his novels are true,‡ and

* "Relatione di M. Bernardo Navagero alla Serma. Repca. di Venetia," 1558.

† Alfonso II., grandson of the Magnanimous, and mentioned by Masuccio as Duke of Calabria. He fled before Charles VIII. in 1495, and abdicated without striking a blow.

‡ "E invoco l'altissimo Dio per testimonio che tutte sono verissime istorie, le piu nelli nostri moderni tempi travenute." —Parlamento.

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that in many cases he is only setting down what he has learnt by the evidence of his senses.* Each novel begins with a dedication to some personage of note, and ends with divers comments by the author. These comments in a measure fill the place of the chorus in Greek drama, and exhibit more completely than the narrative itself Masuccio's own view of the episode therein chronicled. Now and again the terms employed in the novel might leave an impression that evil-doers were being let off too easily, were it not for the scathing denunciation of offence and offender as well, written in the "Masuccio" at the end.† The book begins with a Prologue dedicated to Ippolita, Duchess of Calabria, a patroness of learning and learned herself, and of extraordinary virtue, if the words of Francesco Tuppo in his short dedication to the early editions of the work are to be taken seriously.‡ After a few flowery tropes Masuccio strikes the note which is dominant throughout the entire work, to wit, the profligacy of the ministers of religion, and in the first ten novels he assuredly lays on the scourge with a will. His treatment of this, and indeed of all other subjects, is bluntly realistic, and his constant excursions into real history and his allusions to actual personages show how vastly his essay in story-telling differs from the pure fiction and fictitious history of Boccaccio and Ser Giovanni, and from the fairy tales of Straparola.

Under Alfonso the Magnanimous the literary renown of Naples rose to a point never attained before or since. In his zeal for the cultivation of learning this remarkable man rivalled the activity of Cosimo dei Medici. Like Cosimo he favoured the foundation of an academy of letters, and the learned men he entertained, first and last, at his court, certainly equalled in numbers those who frequented Florence at the same time. Laurentius Valla, Beccadelli, and Pontano all enjoyed his favour, and Filelfo during his turbulent and wandering life spent some time at Naples. Alfonso maintained a long correspondence

* "Siccome per verissimo ho sentito e con piu esperienze toccato con mano."—Novel XXV.

† Novel III. may be taken as an instance.

‡ "Quale guardando la inaudita pudicitia tua."

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with Leonardo Aretino, and Poggio was employed by him to make a translation of the "Cyropædia" of Xenophon. It may be assumed that Masuccio enjoyed the friendship of Beccadelli and of Pontano, seeing that he dedicates to each of them a novel; others he inscribes to the men of affairs about the court, such as Antonello de Petrucciis and Francesco Scales; others to the high nobles of the kingdom, and others to the various members of the royal house of Aragon.

Between Alfonso and his natural son, who succeeded him as Ferdinand I., the difference was vast indeed. It is almost impossible to believe that such a father could have produced such a son. Pontano, who was in Ferdinand's employ both as secretary and ambassador, when writing after the king's death* tells of horrors which might rank with the most hideous barbarities of Ezzelino or Bernabo Visconti. He was cruel and treacherous as a tiger, brutal in speech, lustful, and avaricious. He would spend lavishly to make some display of gaudy and ostentatious pomp, but he would never fail to replace, by the judicial murder of some rich official and the confiscation of his estates, the treasure thus expended. In duplicity, cruelty, and irreligion, he was no unfit match for the contemporary occupants of St. Peter's chair, but it will be vain to search for any such presentment of him in the pages of the "Novellino." Masuccio, a noble by birth, a courtier by profession,† and secretary to Ferdinand's trusted friend and counsellor, Roberto di Sanseverino, could ill afford, whatever he might know and believe, to set down in his book a true picture of the king.

The best that can be said of Ferdinand's rule is that, within the bounds of his own kingdom, the peace was fairly kept. Stained as he was with every vice, he was a

* "De Immanitate," vol. i., p. 318, Ven., 1518: "Ferdinandus rex Neapolitanorum præclaros etiam viros conclusos carcere etiam bene atque abunde pascebat eandem ex iis voluptatem capiens quam pueri e conclusis in cavea aviculis: qua de re sæpe numero sibi ipse inter intimos suos diu multumque gratulatus subblanditusque in risum tandem ac cachinnos profundebatur."

† The "Masuccio" to Novel XLIV., which is filled with fulsome praise of the Duke of Calabria, as bad a man as his father, may be taken as an instance of the writer's servility.

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far-sighted and capable ruler, and, after the suppression of the rebellion of the Angevin nobles, who had been incited to revolt by the refusal of Calixtus IV. to grant him investiture of Naples, he managed for many years to keep his own kingdom quiet, though he did not fail to stir up strife amongst the neighbouring states at every opportunity. No one of his lieutenants did such splendid work in the subjugation of the Angevin revolt as Roberto di Sanseverino, and as a reward for his services he was made Prince of Salerno and Lord High Admiral of the kingdom. Masuccio became his secretary, and, under the favour of such an exalted personage, his social and literary advancement must have been comparatively easy.

The period covered by Masuccio's maturity is the fortunate one of Ferdinand's reign, the time of comparative quiet between the Angevin war and the Revolt of the Barons in 1485, in which fell so many illustrious heads, and which prepared the way for the final ruin of the Aragonese dynasty. Porzio in his history of this movement has set forth fully the causes which led to it, and demonstrates how well justified the barons were in the action they took, and how it was that, at the mere sound of the trumpets of the army of Charles VIII., ten years later, the Aragonese monarchy fell like a house of cards. Of Masuccio personally there is very little information to be gathered. There is no record of his birth or of his death. He was probably born about 1420,* and that he was still living in 1474 is certain, for in the Parlamento, or epilogue, to his book he mentions the death of Roberto di Sanseverino, an event which took place in that year. Seeing that he was Sanseverino's secretary, and that the great majority of his novels are dedicated to prominent Neapolitans, it may be assumed that his life was chiefly spent in Naples and the neighbourhood. Dunlop has set down,† and Roscoe has copied a statement that he passed the greater part of his life in the service of the Dukes of Milan, but for this

* In the Pinto MS., quoted by Settembrini, it is stated that Masuccio's name appears as a witness to a legal document in 1441. He must therefore have been twenty-one years of age at that date.

† "History of Fiction," ii. 172.

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there is no warrant, beyond that given in a few inconclusive words at the beginning of Novel XI. After 1474 Masuccio fades entirely from view. The references he makes to himself in the "Novellino" are few and unimportant; more suggestive is one which occurs in a work by Pontano, an epitaph written to his memory, and a composition scarcely worthy of that writer's high reputation as a Latin scholar.

"TUMULUS MASUTII SALERNITANI FABULARUM EGREGII SCRIPTORIS.*

"Hic quoque fabellas lusit tinxitque lepore,
Condiit ornatis et sua dicta jocis.
Nobilis ingenio, natu quoque nobilis, idem
Et doctis placuit principibusque viris.
Masutius nomen, patria est generosa Salernum,
Hæc simul et vitam præbuit et rapuit."

In the story of Messer Goro and Pope Pius II., Luigi Pulci refers to Masuccio, and furthermore dedicates his story to the Duchess of Calabria in terms which suggest that he had been encouraged by reading the many pleasant tales of Masuccio to make this essay in fiction, and to beg the illustrious lady to accept the same, as she had already accepted the dedication of the "Novellino."† In the appendix to Toppo's "Biblioteca Napoletana," written by Leonardo Nicodemi, there is a passage which claims for Masuccio the honours of a poet, but no fragment of his verses has come down to posterity.‡

Masuccio was born of the Guardati, a noble family of Salerno. In his admirable introduction to the edition of the "Novellino" published in 1874, Signor Luigi Settembrini has been able to supply certain fresh facts concerning

* Aldine edition, 1518, p. 72.

† "Raccolta dei Classici Italiani," Milano, 1804, vol. ii., p. 142. "Masuccio, grande onore della citta di Salerno, molto imitatore del nostro M. Giovanni Boccacio, illustrissima Madonna Ippolita, mi ha dato ardire a scrivere alla Vostra Eccellenza, leggendo a questi di nel suo Novellino molte piacevoli cose, le quali poi che io intesi essere da V. S. graziosamente accettate e lette, ho fatto come i navigante i quali sogliono addirizzar le loro navi dove le loro mercatanzie intendono aver ricapito."

‡ In the "Masuccio" to Novel XXX. he gives a hint that he might, if occasion should demand, become a rhymester, "con un fiume di proprii e convenienti adiettivi quasi in rima posti."

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the family aforesaid, taken from some private genealogical records to which he had been given access. These tell of a certain Luise, or Luigi Guardato, the descendant of a long line of fighting barons, who was secretary to Raimondo Orsini, the prince upon whom Alfonso the Magnanimous had conferred the lordship of Salerno. This Luigi was numbered amongst the oldest nobility of the Seggio del Campo, presumably the aristocratic quarter of the city, and by his marriage with Margherita Mariconda became the father of the writer of the "Novellino." It is further recorded that Masuccio himself married Cristina Pando, and had by her four children. The MS. then goes on to deal with the branch of the Guardati which settled at Sorrento, descendants of which in 1874 were still living.

Masuccio's place in the political and social world may best be realized from the dedications of his novels. From the terms of these it would appear that he must have been intimate with many of the most prominent of the public men of his time, and amongst these may be numbered seven or eight of the leaders in the Barons' revolt of 1485.* It has been noted already that he was secretary to Roberto di Sanseverino, and from the fact that he dedicated to Antonello, Roberto's successor, one of his novels, and wrote a cordial and flattering exordium to the same, it may be inferred that he was on intimate footing with the son of his patron. Under these circumstances it is almost certain that, had Masuccio been living when the revolt of the Barons broke out in 1485, some mention of his name would have occurred in the quasi-judicial proceedings taken against the leaders of the conspiracy. From the appendix to Porzio (ed. 1859), it may be gathered that he was not—even if alive—the secretary to Antonello de Sanseverino, for the names of all the secretaries of the implicated barons are given in the records relating to their trials, and Masuccio's is not amongst them. The fact that a member of his mother's family, Andrea Mariconda, was Vice-Protonotario, and one of the judges who dealt with the accused conspirators, might account for the ab-

* Novel IV. is dedicated to Antonello de Petrucciis; XIII. to the Conti di Lauria; XVIII. to Antonello de Sanseverino; XXX. to the Prince of Bisignano; XL. to the Conte di Tursi; and XLVIII. to the Duca di Melfi.

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sence of his name, but the balance of probability seems to favour the view that he died before the outbreak of the revolt, and was spared the spectacle of the ruin and death of his friends.

No further facts of any importance are forthcoming concerning the personality of Masuccio, but, without wandering into the mazes of constructive criticism, it may be permitted to cite from the "Novellino" itself certain passages which warrant a tentative estimate of his character and leanings. Masuccio seems to have rated himself as one with a message to deliver; his work was perhaps the earliest example of the *Tendenz-Roman;* his phraseology gives one the impression that he wrote with his feelings at a white heat, and when a man delivers his soul in this wise he will generally contrive to let it appear what manner of man he himself may have been. Pulci speaks of Masuccio as "molto imitatore del nostro M. Giovanni Boccaccio," and there is perhaps some analogy between his position in the Aragonese court and that which Boccaccio had occupied in the Angevin. In the Prologue and in the several dedications there are divers over-laboured touches which suggest that he was trying hard to play the courtier, and to consecrate his life to the delectation of the Duchess Ippolita and her ladies; but, judging by the earnest spirit he displays otherwhere, it is hard to believe that he set about his work only with the object of telling witty stories of amorous intrigue and sombre ones of tragic adventure.

In the very Prologue to the work he announces his primary theme, by proclaiming himself the scourger of priestly vices. There is evidence enough and to spare to be gathered from other sources that a censor of this sort was badly needed, but there is also evidence just as strong concerning other evils and abuses which Masuccio lets pass unrebuked. It must be remembered, however, that in all ages the flagellators of existing offences as well as the teachers of new and purer rules of life have chosen their special fields of labour, and Masuccio apparently did not deem himself strong enough to attack the forces of evil on all sides. The cruelty, the avarice, the treachery, and the lust of the rulers of the land, and the misery of the

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people subject to the caprice of one of the most infamous of tyrants, did not greatly stir Masuccio's indignation or pity. These were public evils and public wrongs. They existed in every land and in almost equal degree, and with the facile acquiescence of an Italian in things constituted and with the traditional *pazienza* he was content to bear them, grievous as they were, rather than take arms against them. If they touched him, they touched everyone else as well, and the course of past events had proved over and over again that the struggles for redress and reform which had been begun against the forces of constituted authority, were by no means foreordained to success, and that the outcome of such attempts as had been specially fortunate had rarely been worth the trouble and danger of the enterprise. It may have been a train of reasoning like this which led Masuccio to suffer the ills springing from bad government to go unscathed by his satire, but prudence may very likely have intervened and counselled him that to criticise the acts of a king like Ferdinand would be to place his neck in the hangman's noose.

It is when Masuccia begins to deal with the offences which spring from the corruption of this or that particular class or caste or sex; of those foul blows which are dealt us by the hands we are especially led to trust; and of the foes which lurk within a man's own household, that he seems to find his true vocation. If the words which a man speaks or writes are ever to be taken as evidence of the mind that is in him, then assuredly Masuccio may be credited with ardent hatred of the offences he denounces. Putting aside occasional lapses into licentiousness of expression as accidents inseparable from the age in which he wrote, it is almost impossible to doubt his sincerity as a would-be reformer of manners. It is true he makes now and then reservations and exceptions which appear to us strange and inconsistent. Once he excuses and even commends a cardinal with respect to dealings which he would certainly have censured had he been writing of a friar.* Again, after the manner of Boccaccio, he wishes for the friend to whom the novel in question is dedicated,

* Novel XV.

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fortunes as happy as those of the youth whose successful intrigue with a married woman he has just chronicled;† but in estimating these seeming incongruities some heed must be taken of the change which, since his day, has come over the ordinary conception of sexual love. Masuccio lived in the lingering shadows of the middle ages, and was on this account the heir of a tradition by which certain forms of adultery attained a place, if not amongst the domestic virtues, at least amongst the venial sins. The air was as yet heavy with the miasma bred from the dismal swamp of cramped and artificial life led by womankind in those dreary centuries. The courts of love of France and Provence declared more than once that love between husband and wife was impossible, and the drift of existence within the narrow limits of a feudal castle went far to confirm this proclamation. Love, however, of one sort or another was inevitable, so it found its expression in the faithful unfaith covenanted between *dame* and *serviteur*, in relations the type of which is made familiar to us in the Arthurian romances and in the early Celtic love stories. These relations were shaped by the personal preferences of the lovers themselves, and had but slight regard of the moral obligations repudiated by their adoption. In these early love gestes the youth rarely addresses the maid; he is attracted rather by the mature woman with character and passions developed by the independence she has enjoyed since she was brought out of her seclusion and commanded to marry a man whom she had seen twice or thrice before—a mate chosen, not to please her fancy, but by reason of the fiefs and towns under his control. The loves of such women with the men whose *métier* it was to solace their weariness and woe, occupy a large portion of the ballad and romance literature of the middle ages. Tristram and Yseult, Paolo and Francesca, are but the most noteworthy examples, the finest flowers of this unwholesome passion-nourished thicket of exotic bloom, worked up into pathetic stories and set before us instinct with life and beauty, from having passed through the hands of the great artists who have dealt with them.

† Novel XII.

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With the lapse of time the custom aforesaid became so universal that toleration of the same was inevitable, and after a cycle of toleration came something like approval, or, at any rate, very lenient censure. It is worthy of remark that this new bond of vice very soon put on the guise of virtue, by demanding the absolute fidelity of one offender to the other. If only this faith were duly kept, every other crime consequent on the intrigue would be passed over with indulgence. In the version of Tristram and Yseult given by the Minnesinger, Gottfried von Strassburg, both of the lovers are commended to sympathy and compassion, the inextinguishable fidelity of one to the other, the rejection of all else the world had to offer for the sake of love, being regarded as the supreme exhibition of virtue. To take another, and more familiar instance, Dante, with all his austerity, deals out but mild condemnation to the ill-starred lovers, seeing that he places them in the least terrible circle of the Inferno for the punishment of their offences; and in our own day the severe respectability of Tennyson has allowed us to nourish no slight sympathy for the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere.

The prevalence of this legend of infected passion and impure fidelity, and its survival down to Masuccio's time, must be held largely accountable for the fact that he, who writes himself down over and over again as the scourger of female depravity, should constantly mete out very light censure to offences which seem, judged by modern standards, wellnigh as flagrant as those which he visits with his fiercest denunciation.* To take as an example Novel XXIV., it may be remarked that he begins the story by relating how, as a matter of everyday occurrence, a gallant youth fell in love with a fair dame, the wife of one of the chief gentlemen of the city. He writes about the youth in the kindliest spirit, praising him warmly as he describes in what seemly fashion he essayed

* The influence of mediæval sentiment may also be traced in Novel XLI., where Messer Ciarlo consents to serve his friend in furtherance of his amour by taking a part somewhat similar to that played by the companion in the "Aubade" of Gerault de Berneil, who sings to warn his friend that the dawn is breaking and that it is time to leave his ladylove (Taylor's "Lays and Songs of the Minnesingers and Troubadours," p. 247).

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to win the lady's favour, and demanding from the reader subsequently the deepest sympathy on account of the failure of his enterprise. And in dealing with the lady he does not condemn her for her infidelity to her husband, but because she preferred the embraces of a Moorish muleteer to those of the proper gentleman who had elected to make her his partner in adultery. The speech and action of the lover too, when he takes up the story, serve to demonstrate how strongly the spirit aforesaid had infected current sentiment. He, having caught the lady *flagrante delicto*, does not confine himself to chiding her on his own account, but goes on to rate her soundly for the betrayal of her husband, whom he praises as a gentleman adorned with every excellence. All this is in full harmony with mediæval feeling as to the relation of the sexes. The woman who favours her lover, and him alone, is scarcely regarded by Masuccio as unchaste or worthy of blame, and in the first part of the book he has little or no censure for those who commit themselves with monks and friars, but reserves all his condemnation for the male offenders. The women against whom he writes as the vilest of created beings are those who, not content with a husband and a lover to boot, abandon themselves to some unclean intrigue with a Moor, or a dwarf, or a muleteer.

Masuccio seems to have set out his work with the view of making it serve two principal ends; one to provide a number of diverting stories for the Duchess Ippolita, and the other to shame into better behaviour womankind and all persons wearing the religious habit. Boccaccio and Sacchetti, before his time, and all the Novellieri of the Cinquecento who followed, concern themselves with the same class of subject, but none of them proclaims him so emphatically a *censor morum* or shows such deadly earnestness of purpose. He entered upon a path already well trodden, and a vast host of imitators followed upon his heels; wherefore the mass of literature of the same character as the "Novellino" is a huge one. Masuccio's work would, without doubt, have gone down to the oblivion which has fallen upon Sermini and Sabadino and a host of others, had he not been gifted with the sense of artistic construction which enabled him to set out his pictures

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with a few firm and rapid strokes.* There is no attempt at polish or elaboration; the secret of his immediate success, and of the recognition still given to him by the historians of fiction, comes from his unerring faculty in hitting at once upon the central point of whatever subject he may have in hand, and his rare judgment in selection and subordination, never failing to let the point aforesaid stand out as the main instrument for enforcing the moral, or illustrating the argument under consideration.

Masuccio's canvas is a limited one. A few of his stories are in the vein of genuine buffo, a few more are tragedies pure and simple, but the majority of the residue will be found to treat of one or other of his two particular themes, the castigation of profligate clerics and unchaste women. He devotes one part of the work to each of these specially; but in the other parts he never lets a friar or a woman escape the lash if he finds a chance of laying it on. The most scathing passages, and those which give the most evident signs of sincerity, are those which occur here and there in the "Masuccio" at the end of the stories. These in places almost smoke with the fire of his rage, and, intermixed with his rough-hewn and occasionally incoherent phrases, are to be found passages of real dramatic power. As an instance may be quoted the conclusion to Novel XXIII., in which, after screaming himself hoarse over the crimes of women, he finishes with these words: "Would that it had been God's pleasure and Nature's to have suffered us to be brought forth from the oak-trees, or indeed to have been engendered from water and mire like the frogs in the humid rains of summer, rather than to have taken our origin from so base, so corrupt, and so vilely fashioned a sex as womankind;" or the frightful indictment at the end of Novel VI. which he prefers against women who put on the habit of religious houses—an in-

* One of his happiest efforts is in the Prologue to Part III., which deals with the profligacy of women. He seems to have realized that it would need some special effort on his part to make the stories immediately following acceptable to the Duchess Ippolita; so by the aid of Mercury he exhibits her as the presiding genius of the shrine of chastity, and lets her excellencies shine out all the brighter from comparison with the turpitude of the residue of her sex.

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dictment which is, as he declares, supported by the clearest evidence of his senses;* or the introduction to Novel II., where he prays God soon to make an end of purgatory, so that these friars, being unable to live any longer on the offerings made to them therefor, may be forced to go and work with the mattock.

There are two streams of tendency which sway with peculiar force the common life of the Southern Italians, to wit, the physical side of the sexual passion and the sentiment of religion, and Masuccio may have been impelled unconsciously by the working of these to turn the course of his censure especially against wanton women and lewd friars. While the sun shines, while there is food enough for to-day's meal, and while to-morrow's may be won by an hour's work, while Beppino and Ninetta are conscious of the prick of passion in their veins, they think of little else but love-making, and Beppino is not content merely to sigh after his inamorata or to worship her beauties from a distance. Far from it. Sexual love around the shores of Parthenope was then, as it is now, of that elemental and primitive character of which we find some echo in Lucretius when he writes of that overmastering force which sways the material universe as potently as the bodies of men and women. In Latin countries, as compared with Teutonic, woman is more especially regarded as the instrument of pleasure, and the Neapolitan is subject to a superadded influence of similar nature by reason of the stream of Oriental life which at different periods overflowed his frontiers. Therefore, whenever Beppino may have found that his pretty plaything, which he dreamt of keeping entirely for his own diversion, had befooled and perhaps robbed him, he would roar as loud as Polyphemus over his

* "Taccio anco quanto dir si potrebbe circa lo sposare con li frati, dove io medesimo non una ma piu volte sono intervenuto e visto e toccata con mani."—Novel VI. There is a confirmation of his accusation in a passage in Kemnisius, Ex Concil. Trident., Part III., "de celibatu Sacerdotum": "Memorabile quod Ulricus epistola refert, Gregorium, quum ex piscina quadam allata plus quam sex mille infantum capita vidisset, ingemuisse, et decretum de celibatu tantam cædis causam confessus condigno illud pœnitentiæ fructu purgasse."

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wounded pride, and Masuccio's screed against the whole sex may very well be taken as the concentrated expression of this widely-spread sense of injury and resentment—Beppino, and his interpreter as well, being too oriental in feeling to realize that they themselves should be ruled by the standard they would apply to womankind. From the same source a subsidiary explanation of Masuccio's hatred to the priesthood is forthcoming. As soon as the heavens are clouded, when the world wags ill, when love is under an eclipse, and when the fires of passion begin to burn low, when the lovers find in the place of their spent passion no subject with which their fancy may engage itself, man, and woman also, will turn towards what they are pleased to call their religious duties. Beppino, with many thefts, and perhaps a homicide or two upon his soul, and Ninetta, with a long string of petty sins, and infidelities out of number, will both repair to the priest for the mending of their evil case by the promise of a safe entry to Paradise upon terms not too hard. Now, if they should find—as they assuredly would in many cases—that these men, the physicians of their souls, had become what Masuccio calls "rapacissimi lupi," what more natural than that they should cry out that they were being cheated of their dues, that it was both useless and unseemly to go for religious consolation to men no whit better than themselves. Thus the priestly offence would become something more than a peccadillo, and an outcry would arise against profligate and avaricious clerics, to be caught up and accentuated by Masuccio and other censors.

To illustrate still further the intensity of Masuccio's hatred for women, his twenty-first novel may be compared with the first story of Il Pecorone. The two tales deal with the same theme exactly,* and are substantially the same in detail, the only noteworthy difference being that Masuccio brings into the narrative a certain friend of the hero, a man described as impervious to all the wiles of the sex, and lets him discourse at great length on the falsehood of women and the folly of all those

* This tale is given by Painter in the "Palace of Pleasure," No. XLVII., a translation of Ser Giovanni's version.

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who trust them. Ser Giovanni in his version of the tale is content to let the frailty of the lady in question be revealed simply by the action of the story, assuredly the more artistic method of treatment, but the temptation to preach a sermon on his favourite theme was evidently too strong for Masuccio to resist.*

For Masuccio's hatred against the religious orders another and a more cogent reason than the one already alluded to is not far to seek. The character of the Popes, and of the major part of the high ecclesiastics who ruled Christendom during the last half of the fifteenth century, was bound to be reflected in the morals of the inferior clergy. The contrast between the ideal life, laid down for all Christians alike by the cardinal maxims of the Founder, and the actual career of fraud, and lust, and cruelty, and bloodshed which was followed with few exceptions by the princes of the Church, appeared no doubt less glaring to the contemporary observer than it is to us, but there are abundant instances in the religious history of the time which may be cited to show that this flagrant corruption and the spectacle of sin sitting in high places provoked the wrath of all the men of pure and holy lives still surviving amongst the corruption of the times. Revivals or revolts against the nefarious practices of the priesthood were almost continuous after the notable movement begun by Arnold of Brescia in 1139, and the laudatory terms in which Masuccio speaks of men like San Bernardino, San Vincenzo, Giovanni Capistrano, and Roberto di Lecce—all of them men of holy lives and revivalist leaders—show how fully he appreciated the evils they attacked and how completely his sympathy was with them in their work.† It is not enough for him to accuse the great mass of the vowed professors of religion of every crime under the sun. Over and beyond this he warns his friends

* Settembrini, in a note ("Il Novellino," p. 54), advances a somewhat whimsical reason for his ill-humour towards women, declaring that it arose from the contemplation of the numerous evils which came upon the kingdom through the profligacy of Joanna II.

† In the "Parlamento" he reiterates his praise and appreciation of all priests and monks who lead honest and godly lives.

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that they may not hold converse with anyone wearing the religious garb without loss of character and the good opinion of all worthy men. Even the illustrious Pontano*—one of the last to be suspected of clerical leanings—is rated soundly in that he is too much given to the society of these enemies of the human race,† and by way of pointing his lesson Masuccio goes on to tell a story which sets forth the impiety and blasphemy of the friars in a fashion which would be hard to excuse were not the sincerity of the writer and his zeal for reformation so transparent.‡

At the end of the first part he gives notice that he has said his last word about the priests, admitting at the same time that he has hardly touched the fringe of the question.‖ Here and there it is true he finds a good word for the religious orders, speaking generally, and in well-guarded terms,§ but every individual ecclesiastic, except the revivalist leaders above-mentioned, who appears in the "Novellino," is more or less corrupt and depraved. In Novel XVII. there is a prior who is a companion of thieves and a receiver of stolen goods; in Novel XVIII. a friar of St. Antony swindles a farmer's wife in rascally fashion; in Novel XXIX. another acts the part of Hende

* Novel III.

† Pontano wrote the following words to be inscribed on his own tomb: "Labor, dolor, ægritudo, luctus, servire superbis dominis, jugum ferre superstitionis, quos habet caros sepelire, condimenta vitæ sunt." They scarcely exhibit him as the favourer of clerical dominion.

‡ He writes: "Aprasi adunque la terra, e una con li lor fautori la moltinudine di tanti poltroni vivi tranghiottisca, non solo per castigamento de' presenti ma per timore ed eterno esempio di tutti i futuri scellerati loro pari."—Novel III.

‖ "Essendomi al tutto disposto di tal perversa e malvagia generatione piu avanti non trattare, quantunque a bastanza non abbia scritto."—Novel X.

§ "Questo ben dirò io, e per fermo confesso, quanto de' fatti loro in le passate dieci novelle e in altre parti ho ragionato, non lo avere con intentione fatto di lacerar quelli che a compimento le loro approvate e santissime regole osservano: li quali avvengadioché rari siano, o con difficultà giudicar si possano, pur quelli tali sono indubitatamente e lume e sostenimento de la nostra fede e cristiana religione."—Novel X.

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Nicholas in Chaucer's "Miller's Tale;" and another in Novel XXX. plays the pander to the Prince of Salerno. In fine, it may be noted as an instance worth remark that in Novel XXXIII., which is recognized as the first modern rendering of the story of "Romeo and Juliet," there is presented, instead of the pious and dignified Friar Lawrence, a base fellow who must needs be bribed for the service he does the lovers in joining them secretly in wedlock, and again when he provides the drowsy potion for the ill-starred Giannozza.

In dealing with a work of fiction so important as the "Novellino," it is almost inevitable that a comparison with the "Decamerone" should suggest itself. It has been noted already how Luigi Pulci spoke of Masuccio as a imitator of Boccaccio; there is likewise a passage in the "Novellino" itself which hints that its writer was fired to follow so illustrious a leader;* but however sincere and earnest his desire may have been, his attempt was not a successful one.† In temper and in parts as well, the two men differed so widely that any such essay was bound to fail. Boccaccio was a scholar, and a fastidious one, while Masuccio, if he knew the rules of grammar, certainly did not always regard them. Boccaccio sat serene apart from the rough humours of the people; they diverted him, and it was his pleasure to use them for the delectation of his readers. He did not, like Masuccio, take vice in hand primarily to correct it. He would laugh at it—often indulgently—and at virtue as well, were the laugh necessary to round off his work to perfection. His scorn of formal religion after the spirit of it had been crushed out by ecclesiasticism may have been as sincere as Masuccio's fulminations against the vices of the clergy; but he does not limit himself to the castigation

* Prologue to Part III.

† Agostino Doni, in his "Libreria" (Venice, 1558), writes, p. 80: "Quanti ci sono che s'inviluppono in qualche laberinto d'altri, chi accusa Dante, chi defende il Petrarcha, altri armeggian con 'l Ariosto, e altri concorrono con il Boccaccio a novellare, lascio stare hora dei roba le novelle d'altri, o che gli toglie le dittione intere per non far satira. Benedetto sia il Salernitano che al manco non ha robato pure una parola del Boccaccio, anzi ha fatto un libro il quale e tutto suo."

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of vice and hypocrisy. He makes a travesty of real piety, and excuses or even praises what the sincere professors of religion in all times would have condemned, and never once lapses into such enthusiasm as Masuccio displays in speaking of San Bernardino and the pure and earnest men who followed him. His regard for treatment is careful enough to satisfy the exacting standard of contemporary teaching. How much more highly he rated it in comparison with subject than did Masuccio is evidenced by the setting forth of the two books. The "Novellino" is given to the world as a mere bundle of stories, a succession of rough-hewn powerful studies brought out without forethought or design from the workshop. It wants even the conventional knitting together furnished by Ser Giovanni and Il Lasca to their collections, and constituted as it is, must stand or fall on its own merits, whereas, in the case of the "Decameron," were the tales themselves robbed of three-fourths of their interest, the work as a whole, would still attract and fascinate on account of the extraordinary beauty and delicacy of the setting, which must ever be ranked amongst the acknowledged masterpieces of literary craftsmanship. It is hard to realize any contrast more telling and dramatic than that exhibited between the dainty personalities of the immortal ten, taking their gentle pleasure in their fair retreat, and the pavid crowd stricken with the horror of the pestilence and cowering in the streets and alleys of the city below—between the brilliant masquerade of life in all its humours and all its phases set forth to the listeners by each story-teller in turn, and the grim and almost tangible presence of Death lurking just outside the garden doors.

In the "Novellino" all that Masuccio does in the way of setting and introduction, is to write a Prologue and classify his stories somewhat roughly into five groups, each group being preceded by a short prologue of its own.

The first group deals with the offences of priests and friars, the second with the mishaps which befall those who are over-jealous, and with divers amusing tricks played by cunning knaves, the third with the profligacy

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of women, the fourth with various love-stories and adventures, and the fifth with noble deeds wrought by illustrious personages. Masuccio writes with all the fire of a southern Italian. Whatever he has to say he says, careless as to what terms he shall use for the expression of his meaning. With such a temperament, and such a method of treatment, it will be readily understood by all those who remember the character of the subjects he commonly elaborates that he must often be coarse in diction. He is undoubtedly often coarse in form, but there are few traces in his rugged sentences of that corrupt purpose which shows itself too often amidst the delicate periods of Boccaccio's prose. His manner of speech is not widely different from that used by the Neapolitan of to-day, and he uses it with a touch of pride and satisfaction, writing himself down as the *materno poeta* in the very first phrase of his book. While Pontano and Poggio and other humanists and story-tellers were writing in Latin, it was his object to show whether, with his handling, the Neapolitan idiom might not give as good results as the Tuscan was giving to Pulci and the Ferrarese to Boiardo. His Italian, though involved and inelegant,* is not dialect, as Roscoe affirms in his notice in the "Italian Novelists;" it is, however, sufficiently tinged with popular idiom to show that he had gathered his experience by mixing with men of every class, and that his view of life was a large and comprehensive one. Though he lived about the court, and wrote at times in sycophantic terms, he showed himself quite at home in describing the life of the common people, both in town and country. The pages of the "Novellino" are full of racy characteristic types of Salernitans and Neapolitans. There are the peasants, working as hard then as they work to-day in the Campania Felice and in the mountain vineyards, and the traders and craftsmen of the towns, with their humorous tricks and coarse practical jokes put one upon another, the details of common

* Signor Settembrini in his footnotes to the latest edition is frequently compelled to admit that certain passages, though they show the author's meaning, are obscure, while others baffle comprehension entirely.

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life, the doings of the persons concerned, being all sketched with the firm and easy touch of experience.

If full credit be given to the claims advanced by Francesco Tuppo in his introduction to the early editions of the work, it would appear that, had it not been for the forethought of a certain John Marco and of Tuppo himself, the "Novellino" as a complete work would never have seen the light. From the fact that Masuccio wrote a Prologue to the whole book, and a Parlamento or Epilogue, and prologues to the several parts, it is evident that he left his work complete in manuscript; but the terms of Tuppo's introduction raise a doubt whether he was alive when the edition of 1476 was printed.* In Novel XXII. he speaks of his present old age,† and Novel XLVI. must have been written after 1470, as in it he alludes to the capture of Arzilla by the Portuguese in that year. It is certain that he lived to the end of 1474, but the fact that Tuppo addresses the first edition to the Duchess Ippolita, as Masuccio had dedicated the MS. to her,‡ certainly lends colour to the view that the writer was no longer on earth to discharge this task which fell to Tuppo's care. Again, had he been alive, when his writings were torn up by the officer of justice, presumably at the request of some one or other of the victims of his lash, he would scarcely have let his work appear without some mention of this attack upon him and his mission.‖

Leaving Masuccio's personality in the shadows which bar all further investigation, a short consideration may be given to the history of the book itself. The first edition was printed at Naples in 1476 by Reisinger of Strasburg, who had brought thither the art of printing five years before. Of this edition only one copy is known

* A passage in the "Masuccio" of Novel XXX. shows that the tales were circulated and read—presumably in MS.—as they were written.

† "E con la presente senectu cognosco de' fatti loro."

‡ "Quello como per Masuccio fo ad tua serenita intitulato, cusi stampato a te illustrissima mia Idea pia Ipolita duchessa de Calabria sera per me indirizato."—Introduction Ed. 1483.

‖ Tuppo's words seem to imply that divers copies of the book in MS. were in circulation before 1476.

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to exist, the one in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. The second edition appeared at Milan in 1483, and the third at Venice in the following year. The fourth, of 1492, also of Venice, has for frontispiece a very fine woodcut representing Masuccio offering his book to the Duchess for acceptance, and at Venice also the five succeeding editions—the last in 1541—were printed. The tenth, "l'editione della gatta,"* was brought out without date or place, and, as it was the first to appear after the institution of the Index, was greatly mutilated. The eleventh appeared in Lucca in 1765—"in toscana favella ridotto"—and in 1874 Signor Luigi Settembrini brought out at Naples the edition which the present translator has followed. Signor Settembrini—to quote his own words—thus set to work: "Io mi propongo di restituirlo all' antica lezione per quanto m'e possibile." This task he has performed most thoroughly, and he has not shrunk from bringing back certain passages to the orthodox obscurity or even incomprehensibility of the earlier editions, rather than suffer them to remain in the unauthorized lucidity which the anonymous Tuscan editor of 1765 had shed over them by his emendations. There is no evidence that a complete translation of the book into a foreign language has ever been made. Painter gives Novel XVII. in a form which suggests that it must have been taken from an altered French version; Roscoe includes six, greatly changed from the originals, in his "Italian Novelists;" and a translation of nineteen into French has recently been published. In conclusion, I must acknowledge my heavy obligation to the learned introduction which Signor Settembrini has prefixed to his work, a contribution not merely to the elucidation of this particular book, but of the whole literature of Southern Italy.

* It has a cat and kittens on the title page.

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Dedication by Francesco Tuppo*

MOST illustrious Ippolita of Aragon and of Visconti, who by thy own virtues art more goddess than mortal, what though in this inept beginning of mine the lyre of Orpheus would in sooth be the more fitting instrument wherewith to attempt not only to enumerate but to call to mind thy noble and queenly converse, thy great courage, and thy unheard-of munificence—thou who art the one and only rock of beauty from which flows the spring of chastity. Nevertheless when I, who am entirely devoted to thy most illustrious ladyship, consider those happy years of youth which have been thy portion with us by virtue of thy state as the future queen of this our Ausonian kingdom, since thou hast become in lawful matrimony the spouse of my earthly lord and master, Alfonso of Aragon, Duke of Calabria, the first-born of the invincible and mighty lord, Don Fernando, the peaceful and fortunate King of Sicily, Hungary, and Jerusalem: when I consider thy chastity, the like of which has never before been heard of, that regal and mysterious secret in which thou sharest as an only daughter, and how thou art equal to the Sibilla Cumana in resource, and in humanity superior to all the Roman, Greek, and Trojan ladies who ever lived: when I consider all these things in my mind, I am fain to become an image of stone more quickly even than those who look at Medusa's face. And of a surety our Parthenopeans may well bless great Jove for having in these our days endowed with the gift of thy most excellent virtues this land of ours, which, on account of thy holy prayers, can never be blasted either by human or divine wrath.

Finding myself on this account entirely bound over to your sublimity (as my rustic pen declares,) I will never cease so long as my lowly spirit is master of this

*This dedication is omitted in all editions after that of Venice, 1484.

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worn and weary body of mine to praise and extol your virtues to the skies, and like a devoted slave to show myself ready to do whatever I can for your most illustrious ladyship. Wherefore [this book] having come into my hands by the means of Johan Marco the Parmesan,* that most excellent copyist of all the letters ever [written] in the world, a servant of the king, and a very dear friend of my own, it seemed to me that such a book ought not to be kept back from fame. Now, although the original [writings] were torn in pieces by the very hand of the magistrate,† and burnt by those who learned therein certain news concerning their own households, nevertheless my craft was great enough to preserve a copy of the same; and, seeing that it had been already dedicated to your serenity by Masuccio, I now in like manner address it, thus printed, to you, my most illustrious goddess, the pious Ippolita, Duchess of Calabria. Farewell.

Of your illustrious ladyship the faithful servant,

FRANCESCO TUPPO OF NAPLES.‡

* There is a mention of Johan Marco, Cinico, in the poems of the Count of Policastro, one of the sons of Antonello de Petruciis, who was executed after the conspiracy of the barons. See D'Aloe in his appendix to Porizo's "Congiura dei Baroni."

† Auditore, minister of grace and justice.

‡ Francesco Tuppo was a doctor of laws and a clerk in the royal service. He was the author of a version of Æsop's Fables, rendered into the Italian, which was printed in 1486.

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Prologue

THE NOVELLINO OF THE NOBLE MAKER IN THE MOTHER TONGUE, MASUCCIO GUARDATO OF SALERNO, DEDICATED TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS IPPOLITA OF ARAGON, OF THE HOUSE OF VISCONTI AND DUCHESS OF CALABRIA.* HERE BEGINS IN AUSPICIOUS WISE THE PROLOGUE:

SINCE I clearly understand and hold as an indisputable fact, most illustrious and exalted lady, that it would ill become me to compose a book to the music of my mean and harsh-toned lyre, that it would become me even less were I to call the same after my own name, I see that, in so doing, I might be more justly rebuked for my temerity than commended either in great or small degree for my gifts of eloquence. Nevertheless, having from my most tender youth busied myself in the exercise of my wit, coarse and unpolished though it be, having written down with my rude and sluggish hand certain novels, the truth of which is approved by real and authentic events which have come to pass in former times, and in these our days, and having sent these same to divers worshipful persons—as in sooth the titles of the stories themselves will clearly demonstrate—the desire has often come upon me to gather together all such of these as may be scattered abroad in divers places,

* Ippolita Maria, the daughter of Francesco Sforza by his marriage with Bianca, the natural daughter and only issue of Filippo Maria Visconti, the last Duke of Milan of that family. She married in 1465, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, the eldest son of King Ferdinand I. and grandson of Alfonso the Magnanimous. She had by him two sons and one daughter: Ferdinand, who succeeded to the throne of Naples on his father's abdication, Don Pietro, and Donna Isabella, Duchess of Milan, wife of the Gian Galeazzo Sforza who was dethroned and slain by Ludovico Moro. She was a woman of intelligence and a patron of learning. Constantine Lascaris was her tutor in Greek, and dedicated to her the Greek Grammar published at Milan in 1476, the first Greek book printed in Italy. She died at Naples in 1484 and was buried in the Church of the Annunziata.

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and, by the collection thereof, to form the present little book, calling the same—on account of its trifling worth—The Novellino, and dedicating and sending it to you, who are the mainstay and light of this our Italian land.

This I do in order that you, with the fluency of your accomplished tongue and the excellence of your rare wit, may castigate and polish the many rusty places you may find abounding therein; then, after you shall have cut off and taken away any superfluities you may discover, you may—*licet indigne*—give it a place in that excellent and glorious library of yours.* And although there were at work divers causes which almost drew me back from this scheme of mine, and dissuaded me from entering upon this work, still, when I happened not long ago to call to mind a certain instance, greatly in the mouths of the vulgar, which actually occurred in our city of Salerno not many years since, I felt comforted thereby and spurred on to carry out my proposed work. What this instance aforesaid was, I intend to let you know before I write further.

I must tell you, therefore, that in the days of Queen Margaret,† of happy and illustrious memory, there lived in this our city a certain Genoese merchant, a man of great wealth, engaged in traffic on a vast scale, renowned by name in all parts of Italy, and called Messer Guardo Salusgio. His family, moreover, was one of the most honourable of the city. Now it chanced one day that this same merchant was walking backwards and forwards in front of his bank, which was situated in a street called La Drapperia, a quarter in which were to be found many other banks, and jewellers', and tailors' shops as well. During his walk it came to pass that he espied lying just

* The Aragonese kings collected a fine library in Naples. It was sacked by the French under Charles VIII. in 1495.

† Daughter of Charles of Durazzo, who was beheaded in 1348. She married her cousin, Charles III. (Durazzo), by whom Joanna I. was deposed and murdered. She was the mother of Ladislas, King of Naples, d. 1414, and of Joanna II., d. 1435. She was a woman of great ability and courage, and it was on this account that Ladislas, who was an infant when his father died, was able to retain the throne. She died in 1412, and lies buried in the Cathedral of Salerno, where a gorgeous tomb, the work of Baboccio da Piperno, was erected to her memory.

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at the feet of a poor tailor who was there plying his trade, a Venetian ducat; whereupon he, being quite familiar with the impression and device thereof, although the coin itself was all muddy and bruised, knew straightway what it really was, and without any hesitation stooped down and said, smiling the while, "By my faith, here is a ducat." The wretched tailor before him, who was patching and mending a doublet in order that he might earn for himself a little bread, when he saw what had come to pass, was so much overcome with poisonous envy, by his extreme poverty, and by rage and vexation as well, that he turned his face to Heaven, clenching his fists in the tempest of his fury, and uttering curses against both the justice and the power of God, ending with these words, "It is well said that gold runs after gold, and that the ill fortune of the miserable never changes. Here am I, a wretched wight, who have laboured hard all through this day without earning as much as five tornesi* by my toil, and I forsooth find round about me nought but sharp stones, which pierce and ruin my shoes. This man, who is master of a mighty store of treasure, has now picked up a golden ducat at my very feet, a thing which he needs just as much as the dead need incense." While he was thus lamenting, the wise and prudent merchant betook himself into the shop of the silversmith who lived opposite, and charged the latter to restore the ducat to its original beauty by the means of fire and of the tools he used for such work. Then, with a pleasant smile upon his face, he turned towards the poor tailor and addressed him in these words: "My good man, you were very wrong to murmur against God in such fashion because He acted with a wise purpose in thus letting me find this ducat, forasmuch as, if it had chanced to fall into your hands, you would very soon have parted with it. Nay, even if you had kept it, you would have put it away all alone by itself amongst your poor rags, and would not have placed it where it should be; whereas, now that it has come into my possession, it will fare in just the opposite wise for I will take care that it be put amongst its fellows in a fine and numerous com-

* Tornese, an old French coin worth the third part of a French crown.

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pany of coins." And after he had thus spoken, he returned to his bank and threw the coin which he had picked up on the top of many thousands of florins which were already there.

For the reason then that I have composed—according to the illustration of the fable above written—a little book of my own out of certain novels which were scattered about, some here and some there, I have long wished, because of all these reasons which I have mentioned aforetime, to send the same to you, most worshipful silversmith and super-excellent adept in works of this sort, albeit you will find them, like the ducat, very muddy and sadly beaten out of shape. Thus you may correct and beautify my book with those tools of yours which are always ready at hand, and when it shall have become fair and seemly, it may peradventure be deemed worthy of a very humble place amongst your sumptuous and most elegant volumes.

And this same book of mine in its new place will only lend a fresh and a greater adornment to the whole; for, as the philosopher hath it, when things of an opposite nature are brought into close conjunction, their inequalities become the more manifest therefor. And over and beyond this, I make my prayer to you that, at some future time when leisure may be granted to you from your other duties, you will not look upon it as an irksome task to read these novels of mine, because I am well assured that you will find therein many merry conceits and delightful jests, which will prove to you an unceasing source of pleasure and recreation. And if, peradventure, there should be amongst those who listen to them some canting bigot,* some follower of those false ministers of religion—concerning whose wicked lives and nefarious vices I mean to record some pretty stories in the first ten of my novels—some fellow who would willingly rend me with his ravening teeth, I beg you that you will on no account turn aside from the path you have undertaken to tread because men of this sort may declare that I am a blasphemer, and that I have uttered evil slanders against the servants of God with my

* "Santesso." The edition of 1483 gives "sanctesso," and that of 1484 "sanctese."

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envenomed tongue. In a strife like this, indeed, I ask nothing more but that Truth herself should, in the time of my need, take up arms in my defence, and bear witness on my behalf that I am not moved to act in this wise on account of any desire of mine to speak ill of others, or of any personal or particular hatred which I bear towards men of this sort.

But, on the contrary, so as not to hide the truth in any way, I have been seized with the wish to bring to the notice of some powerful prince or other, and likewise to the notice of divers other particular friends of mine, certain instances, some of which have happened in our own day, and some in times not very long past. By the consideration of these the persons above-named may furnish themselves with full information concerning the many and varied methods, and the wicked devices, by means of which foolish, or rather, not very wise, laymen have, in past times, been tricked and befooled by these false professors of religion. My purpose in doing this is to make sure that those now living may become more wary of such folk, and that the generations of the future may be prepared so as not to suffer themselves to be led into entanglements by this vile and corrupt crew, working under the cover of simulated righteousness. And furthermore I, recognizing the fact that amongst the ministers of religion there are some good men,* perceive that I am of necessity constrained to follow their example, and to imitate their doings in certain matters. I feel this chiefly because the greater number of monks and friars, as soon as they get a cowl over their heads, seem to fancy that full licence has been granted to them to put the worst slanders upon all laymen, both in public and in private as well, adding that all such men are surely damned, and many other bestialities for which they ought to be stoned.

Now if perchance they should be minded to contend in opposition to me by making the assertion that, when they preach, they rebuke and scourge the sins of the wicked, I can easily answer them thereanent by remarking that, when I write, I do not set down words against the virtues

* Orig., *cognoscendo io li religiosi assai bone persone.* The sense seems to require "*tra*" before "*li religiosi.*"

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of the good. And in this wise, without any trickery or favour given to one above another, we shall all transgress and all be chastised by the same stripes. Therefore, seeing that I am disposed to follow their example and to write with all truth concerning the many villanies and the corrupt lives of every one of them, no one at all ought to feel any displeasure thereanent. Nevertheless, with regard to those whose ears are choked with holy water* in such wise that they cannot bring themselves to listen to aught spoken amiss concerning those vowed to religion, it seems to me that the best and only remedy for their infirmity will be to let them go their way in God's name, without ever reading or hearing tell of these novels of mine. And, keeping up their commerce with the friars, they will get to know more thoroughly every day that passes how profitable such conversation is both to their bodies and to their souls. And as such men as these are abundantly furnished with all sorts of charity, they will continually impart the same virtue to their associates. And you, most worshipful and beauteous lady, reading my volume with your wonted friendliness, may perchance find therein some flowerets intermixed with the many thorns; which thing will cause you now and then to remember the least of all your servants, your most humble Masuccio, who, without ceasing, recommends himself to you, and prays the gods for the increase of your happy and prosperous estate. Farewell.

* Orig., *ammassate de santa pasta*. "Pasto is by metaphor much used for court holy water, fond entertaining hopes to feed fools withal."—FLORIO.

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MASUCCIO:

THE brief and inept exordium addressed to your most famous serenity being now finished, I will let follow straightway the novels, or rather the stories, which I have already promised; and in the first ten of these, as I have before stated, will be set forth divers hateful deeds of some of these professors of religion. Amongst these will be found certain tales which will not only rouse the astonishment of those who listen thereto, but their inward grief as well; some there are which will not be passed in review without merry laughter and rejoicing. Amongst the rest, the first novel is dedicated to the invincible and most puissant king our lord and master; and, when this shall have come to an end, I intend to deal with divers other themes, some diverting, some moral, and some pitiful and worthy of your tears, going on in the order which follows.

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Novel the First

ARGUMENT

MAESTRO DIEGO IS CARRIED BACK DEAD TO HIS CONVENT BY MESSER RODERICO. ANOTHER MONK, THINKING HIM TO BE ALIVE, STRIKES HIM WITH A STONE, AND THEN FEARS HE MAY HAVE SLAIN HIM THEREBY, WHEREFORE HE TAKES TO FLIGHT, MOUNTED UPON A MARE. BY A STRANGE CHANCE HE MEETS, RIDING ON A STALLION, WITH LANCE IN REST, THE DEAD MAN, WHO FOLLOWS HIM ALL THROUGH THE CITY. THE LIVING MONK, HAVING BEEN ARRESTED, CONFESSES HE IS GUILTY OF THE HOMICIDE, AND IS DEALT WITH AS A MALEFACTOR, BUT THE CAVALIER MAKES KNOWN THE TRUTH, AND THE FRIAR IS DELIVERED FROM THE DOOM HE MERITED NOT.

TO THE MIGHTY KING, DON FERDINAND OF ARAGON*

EXORDIUM

MOST mighty and glorious king, both in the present day, and in times past as well, the number of skilful poets, of eloquent speakers, of most excellent writers, who have laboured and still labour in elegant prose and in noble verse, in Latin and in the mother tongue, to celebrate the plentiful honour and the endless renown of your most serene Majesty, has been so great,

* Ferdinand I. was the natural son of Alfonso the Magnanimous. He was born in 1431, and succeeded to the kingdom on his father's death in 1458. He married (1st) Isabella of Chiaromonte, by whom he had the following children: Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, who succeeded him; Federico d'Altamura; Giovanni, who became Cardinal; Francesco, Duke of Saint Angelo; Beatrice, who married Mathias, King of Hungary; and Leonora, Duchess of Ferrara; (2nd) Joanna, the sister of Ferdinand, King of Aragon, by whom he had a daughter, Joanna, who married his nephew, King Ferdinand II. He died in 1494.

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that I am persuaded my rude and homely style must appear to you not otherwise than as the black spot in the centre of the pure white ermine.* Nevertheless, since your Highness has deigned with your accustomed courtesy to assure me that it would give you great pleasure were I to set down in writing some record which may preserve the memory of that remarkable adventure which happened in the kingdom of Castile to a certain cavalier and a minor friar, I desire, with what speed I may, to obey these your wishes and I would sooner fail in respect to what I write, than by my silence seem to fail in any way in dutiful obedience towards you. For this reason, and not on account of any rash humour of mine, I have determined to enter the difficult labyrinth, and boldly presume that this unworthy script of mine may be read, peradventure, by so puissant a king. Wherefore I beg you, with all the humility which the occasion demands, that it may please you kindly to accept the same, hoping that when your other occupations may give you leisure, you will not find it tedious to peruse it in the company of your stalwart and active children and foster-children. And, in addition to the fact that the story in itself is noteworthy, you will find therein divers pleasantries and feats worthy of all praise wrought by certain friars, the record of which will, I doubt not, only serve to increase and augment your reverence and devotion to men of this sort. Therefore your most faithful Masuccio, casting himself at your feet and seeking your good grace, implores that he may not be reckoned by you amongst the number of those whose names are no longer held in remembrance. Farewell.

* Ferdinand was the founder of the Neapolitan Order of the Ermellino.

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THE NARRATIVE

I WILL tell you then, most righteous king, that in the times when our lord and king, Don Fernando of Aragon,* of happy and illustrious memory, your most worthy grandfather, and the ruler of the kingdom of Castile, bore tranquil and protecting sway, there lived, attached to a religious house in Salamanca, an ancient and very noble city of the above-named kingdom, a certain friar minor named Maestro Diego da Revalo, who, being no less well versed in the learning of the Thomists than of the Scotists, had been deemed worthy to be chosen and appointed one of those who, in consideration of a generous salary, should expound this teaching in the excellent schools of the famous university of this city. In this calling he made the wondrous fame of his learning widely known throughout all the kingdom; and, besides this, he would now and again preach certain short sermons more noted for their useful and sensible tone than for any great show of devotion. And being still a youth, and of a very comely presence, and graceful as well; being subject, moreover, to the heats of amorous passion, it happened that one day, while he was preaching, his eye fell upon a young lady in his congregation who was endowed with the most marvellous beauty. This lady, who was called by name Donna Caterina, was the wife of one of the chief gentlemen of the city, to wit, Messer Roderico d'Angiaja; and the friar, as soon as ever he beheld her, was mightily pleased with the sight of her. Therefore Master Cupid, by means of the fair seeming of her beauty, dealt a stroke of love to his heart already inflamed. After he had come down from the pulpit he betook himself to his cell; and there, having cast aside all his theological reasonings and sophistical arguments, he gave himself up entirely to thinking of the fair young woman who had so potently captivated him. And when he came to know the high

* Ferdinand the Just, King of Aragon and Regent of Castile. He married Eleanora of Castile, and was the father of Alfonso the Magnanimous. He died in 1416.

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estate of the lady, and whose wife she was, and to realize what a crazy task he was taking in hand, he set to work to persuade himself to abstain from attempting such an enterprise as this. Nevertheless, he would now and again say to himself, "Love, when he wills to bring his forces into play, has no regard for equality of blood; for, were this necessary, the great ones of the earth would not for ever come plundering our coasts. Therefore Love, in justice, should allow us to love those above our station, as he has allowed our superiors to stoop to those below them. No one is smitten by the strokes which Love deals while taking thought of the same; they come ever unexpectedly; wherefore, if I have been surprised unarmed by this sovereign Love—against whose attacks men strive in vain, seeing that they can in no wise resist them—I am deservedly overcome. And having thus become his subject, happen what may I will throw myself into this fierce battle, and if I only gain therein death and the riddance of all earthly pain, at least my soul will with boldness and confidence take its flight, because I shall have dared to spread my snares in such exalted ground." And having thus spoken, without going back to the first negative arguments he had used, he took up paper, and, with many deep sighs and scalding tears, wrote to the lady of his love a fitting and elegant letter, praising in the first instance her beauty, more divine than mortal; then setting forth how completely he was overcome by the same in such degree that he was now waiting either for her favour or for death; and concluding by saying he knew well enough that, by reason of her high estate, he himself was in no way worthy to be allowed an audience with her, still he besought her, of her compassion, that she would deign to grant him time and opportunity whereby he might be able to have parley with her in private, or at least to accept him as her humble servant in the same wise as he had chosen her as the one supreme queen of his soul. Then, having brought his letter to an end with divers other flowery speeches, and having closed and several times kissed the same, he gave it to his clerk, with directions as to whither he should convey it. Now this clerk, being well trained to service of this sort, hid the

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letter in a secret receptacle on his left side, such as men of this kind are wont to have about them, and went his way to the place whither he had been ordered to go. When he had duly come there, he entered the house, where he found the gracious lady with many of her women-folk about her, and, having given her becoming salutation, he spake thus to her: "My master recommends himself to you, and begs you that you will let him have a little delicate flour wherewith to make wafers for the host, concerning which thing he has written more at length in this letter." The lady, who by nature was very discreet, no sooner saw the letter than it seemed to her certain what sort of message it would bear to her; and, having taken the same and learnt by reading it what was the drift thereof, she was by no means affronted to learn that the writer was enamoured of her, although she was very honest and chaste in her life.

In truth, she reckoned that she herself was fair beyond all other women; and, as she read, her heart rejoiced greatly when she perceived what high praises were lavished on her beauty, following the example of that woman who, together with original sin, acquired that innate passion of vanity which has now infected all the residue of the female sex; for women hold the universal belief that all their fame and their honour and their glory lies in nothing else than in being loved and courted amorously and praised for their beauty, willing rather to be accounted fair and faulty than to be accredited with the highest virtues and an ugly face. Nevertheless, she holding with good reason all friars in strong dislike, made up her mind that she would in no wise grant Maestro Diego one jot of what he asked, nay rather, that she would give him his answer in terms of scant courtesy. Furthermore she resolved that, on this occasion, she would say naught of the matter to her husband; wherefore, abiding in this purpose of hers, she turned to the clerk, and, without showing that aught had occurred to disquiet her in the least, she said to him: "Go tell your master that the one who owns my flour wants it all for his own purposes; therefore let him take thought to seek some elsewhere. Tell him, likewise, that there is needed no other reply to

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his letter; but if he should still desire one, let him give me due notice, and then, as soon as my husband shall have come back to the house, he will straightway set to work to do for him the favour which this proposal of his deserves."

This unsympathetic answer was duly conveyed to Maestro Diego, but it in no wise lessened his ardour; indeed, his love and his desire seemed rather to burn with a fiercer flame therefor. He let relax not a whit his pursuit of the enterprise he had undertaken; and, because it happened that the house of the lady was quite near to the convent, he began once more to cast his amorous glances upon her with such constant importunity, that she could not gaze out of a window, or go to church, or to any other place without doors, and not find the provoking monk continually hovering around. Wherefore it happened that this matter became known to all the neighbours who dwelt near by, and was furthermore brought to the notice of a great part of the city. For this reason, the lady at last told herself that the affair was one which she ought no longer to keep from her husband's ears; fearing, at the same time, that, if it should come to his knowledge through the information of anyone else, over and above the danger thereof, she might be held on the score of the same to be something less than an honest woman. So finding all her thoughts to be in full agreement over this matter, she laid it before her husband point by point, one night when they were together. The husband, who was a gentleman of worship and high-spirited as well, found his anger so fiercely kindled by what he heard, that he with difficulty held himself back from going in that self-same hour to carry fire and sword against the convent and all the friars therein. But after he had calmed his rage somewhat, and spoken many words of praise anent the prudence and honesty of his wife, he bade her give a promise to Maestro Diego, and to let him come to the house on the following evening in such fashion as might seem to her to be most fitting and convenient, so that at the same time he might bring to pass the satisfying of his own honour, and the deliverance of his dear and well-loved wife from any dan-

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ger of contamination. The rest of the plot he bade her leave to his own care.

Albeit that it was difficult for the lady to imagine to what issue the affair would come, nevertheless, in order to comply with the wishes of her husband, she answered that she would do as he directed, and as the clerk was for ever coming back to her, seeking by some new craft to sap the stubborn rock of her chastity, she said to him one day: "Commend me well to your master, and tell him that the great love he bears towards me, together with the scalding tears which, according to his letters written to me, he sheds for me without ceasing, have at last found a resting-place in my heart, in such wise that I now seem to belong more to him than to myself. Now, as our good fortune has willed it, Messer Roderico is gone this day into the country, where he will stay the night, lying at an inn. Wherefore, when the clock shall have struck three, let him come to me privily, and at that hour I will grant him an interview according to his wishes. But I earnestly beg him that he will say naught concerning this affair to any friend or companion of his, however intimate he may be." The novice, marvellously delighted, went his way and delivered this gracious message to his master, who forthwith became the happiest man the world had ever held, notwithstanding that the brief time which must elapse ere the given moment would come seemed to him a thousand years.

And when the hour drew nigh, and after he had well perfumed himself, so that he might in no wise suggest the friar, Fra Diego, deeming that he would require all his strength to gain the prize in the course he proposed to run, made a good meal of the choicest and most delicate meats that could be gotten. Having put on his accustomed habit, he betook himself to the lady's door; and, finding this open, he entered straightway. Whereupon a waiting girl appeared and conducted him, as if he had been a blind man, through the darkness into the hall, where he deemed that he would be joyfully received by the lady herself; but in lieu of this he found awaiting him the master of the house and a certain trusty varlet of his. These two, having taken a firm grip of him with

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their hands, strangled him without making any disturbance over the deed.

After he had made a dead man of Maestro Diego, the gentleman began to rue somewhat that he should have sullied his puissant hands by killing a minor friar; and, realizing that mere regret would never mend the matter, he considered it best, both for the sake of his own honour and through fear of the anger of the king, that he should rid the house of this dead body; so he forthwith devised in his mind a plan to convey it back to the convent. Wherefore he hoisted the body on his servant's back, and made the man bear it into the friars' garden. Then, having easily found entrance into the premises, they conveyed it into that part of the house which the friars were accustomed to use as a privy, where by chance they found amongst the tumble-down seats only a single one which was in order; indeed, it is ever a thing to be remarked, that a greater part of the houses of the Conventuals* have more the semblance of robbers' caves than of habitations of the servants of God. On this one seat they set the dead friar, making it appear that he had come there for his needs; and, having left him, they returned home.

Now while Maestro Diego was being bestowed in this fashion, it happened that another one of the friars, a young and merry fellow, was seized about midnight with a sudden natural longing to betake himself to the same spot; so, having lighted a little lamp, he went in haste to the place where the dead body of Maestro Diego was

* The disputes in the Franciscan Order over the pontifical explanation of the monastic rule and the vow of poverty, which led to the secession of the Fraticelli and the formation of the "Beghards" and the Brethren of the Free Spirit in the latter part of the thirteenth century, came ultimately to an issue in the division of the order into two branches, the Conventuals and the Observantists; the former procuring license to live under a rule of mitigated severity, and the latter adopting the original rule of St. Francis in all its severity. The separate organization was finally established during the pontificate of Leo X., and in the early part of the sixteenth century the Capuchins, founded by Matteo di Basio, were established as an offshoot of the Observantists. In France the stricter Franciscans are known as Cordeliers.

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seated. He saw at once who was there, and, believing him to be alive, he drew back somewhat without saying a word, for the reason that, on account of some envy and dislike of one another as friars, there was between these two a fierce and mortal hatred. The young brother waited in a corner until the man whom he deemed to be Maestro Diego should have finished what he had in his mind to do; and, after he had tarried some long time in thus deliberating over the matter, and without noticing any sign of moving on the part of Maestro Diego—feeling moreover that his necessity was growing urgent—he said to himself more than once, "God's faith, this fellow sits there, and refuses to make way for me, for no other reason than to show me, even in a matter of this sort, the enmity which he bears towards me through his ill will, but in this instance he will find his spite of no avail, forasmuch as I will endure as long as I can; then, if I find that he remains firm set in his obstinacy, though it is open to me to repair otherwhere, I will not do this, since it is against my will." Now Maestro Diego, like a vessel which had fixed her anchors in firm ground, made no sign of movement, great or small; whereupon the friar, finding himself able to hold out no longer, cried out in a rage, "Of a truth it cannot be God's pleasure that you should put such an affront as this upon me, and I, on my part, can endure it no longer." So taking up a large stone, and going close to Maestro Diego, he dealt him therewith such a blow on the chest that he fell over backwards without moving one or other of his limbs. The friar then perceived how shrewd a stroke he had given, and next marked that his foe lay quite still where he had fallen, wherefore he began to fear lest he might have killed him outright with the stone. He took a glance at the body, now believing one thing and now another, and at last went close thereto, and then, after he had viewed it by the light of his lantern, he knew for certain that it was the body of a dead man (as indeed it was ere this mishap), and believed that he himself had assuredly killed him in the manner above described. Whereupon, wailing over the catastrophe, and fearing lest, on account of the ill will known to subsist between them, he should be sus-

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pected of the fatal blow, and be mulcted of his life thereanent, there more than once came into his mind the resolution to hang himself by the neck; but, having given the matter better consideration, he determined to carry the body out of the convent and to fling it down in the street, in order to keep off from himself all suspicions which men in the future might have against him for the reason already mentioned. So, having it in his mind to carry out this design, he suddenly remembered the public and shameful court that Maestro Diego had persisted in paying to Donna Caterina; then he said to himself, "And where, forsooth, could I take this fellow with greater ease, and with less suspicion to myself, than to the door of Messer Roderico's house, seeing that it is hard by, and furthermore, men will certainly believe that this man, going after the wife, has been slain by the husband."

Speaking thus to himself, and without further canvassing the matter, he hoisted Maestro Diego on his shoulders, after no little trouble, and carried him up to the door aforesaid, out of which, only a few hours before, he had been dragged a corpse, and there left him. Then, without having been observed by anyone, he made his way back to the convent.

Now although the work of reparation he had just done seemed sufficient so to ensure his safety, nevertheless it occurred to him that it might be well for him to withdraw himself from the place for a time on some colourable pretence; wherefore, as soon as he had thus decided in his mind, he betook himself to the cell of the superior and spake in these words: "Father, the day before yesterday, for the reason that we were lacking in beasts of burden, I had perforce to leave behind me the greater part of our day's work at the house of a man much devoted to our order in the neighbourhood of Medina. Wherefore, with your blessing, I would fain go fetch our goods, taking with me the mare we have here in the convent, and by God's good will I will come back with the same to-morrow or the day after. When he heard these words, the superior not only gave the friar full leave to do as he proposed, but gave him likewise high commendation on account of his forethought. As soon as the friar got his answer he

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set his affairs in order, and, having prepared the mare for the journey, awaited the dawn to set forth on his way.

Messer Roderico, who all that night had slept little or not at all, through disquiet over the deed he had wrought, when at last the day was near at hand took occasion to send his servant into the purlieus of the convent, in order that by listening he might discover whether the friars had yet come upon the dead body of Maestro Diego, and what they might have to say about the matter. But as the servant went forth to discharge the errand which had been given him, he espied Maestro Diego himself seated before the door with the air of one who might be holding a disputation, a spectacle which gave him no little fright—such, in sooth, as a man may well feel on looking at a dead body—and, having run back into the house, he quickly called his master, and, bringing out his words with difficulty, pointed out to him how the dead body of the friar had been brought back thither. The gentleman was mightily amazed at this mischance, which in sooth gave him cause for still more doubt; nevertheless, being reassured by the justice of the enterprise in which he believed himself to be engaged, he prepared to await with good courage for the successful issue of the matter. Therefore, turning towards the dead man, he spake thus: "You, then, must needs be the plague of my house, seeing that neither dead nor alive can I hale you therefrom! Nevertheless, out of spite for the person who brought you hither, I will take care that you only return to the place whence you came on the back of a beast, seeing that in your lifetime a beast you were yourself." And having thus spoken, Messer Roderico gave order to his servant to fetch from the stable of a neighbour of his a stallion which was there kept for the use of the mares and the she-asses of the city.

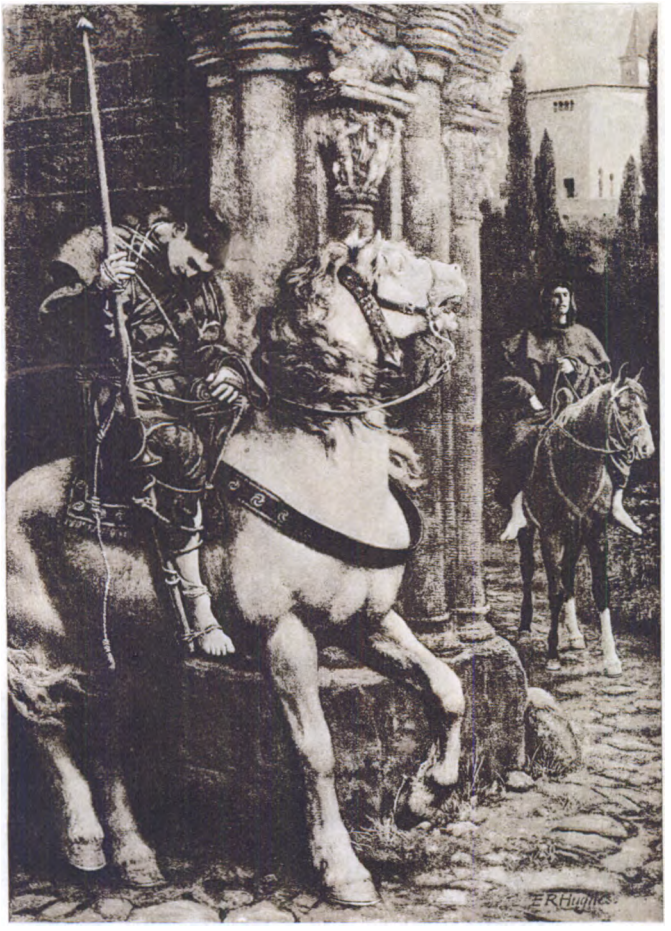
Thereupon the servant made good despatch, and, having fetched the stallion equipped with saddle and bridle and all other necessary gear, the two together hoisted up the dead body aforesaid on the stallion's back, in such manner as Messer Roderico had already determined. Then, when they had bolstered him up in the saddle, and bound him fast therein, they furnished him with a lance,

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"*Marco the Piper.*"

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duly set in the rest, and put the reins in his hand as if they were minded to send him to the wars. Having got him thus in array, they led him to the place in front of the church of the friars, and there they tied the horse to the gate and straightway went back home.

By this time the young friar began to think that he would do well to set off on the journey he proposed to take; wherefore, having first opened the door of the convent and then mounted his mare, he sallied forth, but when he found Maestro Diego stationed there in the accoutrement before described, he was fain to believe that the dead man before him was threatening to kill him with the lance he carried. Of a sudden he was stricken with so terrible an access of fear, that he stood in no small danger of falling down dead on the spot; moreover, there came into his mind the dreadful suspicion that peradventure the spirit of the friar had once more entered the dead body, and that, by way of punishment, it had been ordained that Maestro Diego should follow him about whithersoever he might go, according to the beliefs of certain simple folk. And while he stood thus confounded and terror-stricken, not knowing which way he should turn, the stallion perceived by the odour he sniffed that a mare must be somewhere near about; and, getting himself in order for the work, and neighing the while, he strived to get anear her, thus throwing the poor friar into greater terror than ever. Nevertheless, recovering his wits somewhat, he made as if he would urge the mare along the road, but she, turning her dugs towards the stallion, began to play with her heels. The friar, who was not the best horseman in the world, was wellnigh upset hereby, and without waiting for a second bout, he clasped the mare's sides tightly with his legs, and struck his spurs into her flanks. Then, hanging with both his hands on to the pack-saddle and loosening the reins, he let the beast go whither fortune might take her. The mare, when she felt the spurs driven so firmly into her flanks, was incited thereby to start off, at the top of her speed and without guidance, along the first road which lay open before her, and the stallion, seeing that the prey he longed for had taken to flight, snapped in his violent passion the

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slender cord by which he was tethered, and rushed after her in fierce pursuit.

The poor friar, perceiving that his foe was on his traces, and turning to look over his shoulder, saw Maestro Diego there with his lance firmly clasped in hand, as if he were some fiery knight entering the tilt-yard; whereupon this last fear of his put to flight the first; and, as he thus fled, he began to cry out aloud, "Help! help!" Now, because of this shouting and of the clatter made by the uncontrolled horses, all the townsfolk betook themselves to the doors and the windows—it being by this time broad daylight—and each one looked on in amazement. Then rose up a great shout of laughter at so novel and strange a sight as the chase of one minor friar on horseback by another, this one looking no less like a dead man than that. The mare, uncontrolled as she was, ran now here, now there, through the streets, taking whatever road seemed to please her best, and behind her the stallion, hot and furious, kept up the pursuit. There is no need to tell how narrowly the friar more than once escaped being wounded by the lance. The huge crowd of people kept on following them with cries and whistlings and howlings, and on all sides were heard the shouts, "'Ware of yourselves! Stop him!" Some hurled stones, and others belaboured the stallion with sticks, each one of the crowd being keenly set on the task of separating them, not from any feeling of compassion for the fugitives, but rather from the desire to know what might be the names of these men, whom, on account of the rapidity of their flight, the bystanders were not able to recognize. And, thus harassed, they made their way by chance to one of the gates of the city, where they were brought to close quarters and captured together, the dead and the living monk as well; whereupon it was at once made known who they were, to the no little amazement of all those who were round about.

Then they led away both the friars on horseback to the convent, just as they were taken, and the superior and all the brethren as well were mightily grieved when they saw them brought in. The dead man they buried straightway, and prepared to give the living one a taste of the strappado; but he, as soon as he was tied up thereto, feel-

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ing in no way disposed to undergo the torment, made full confession that he had taken Maestro Diego's life for the reason written above, but he could give no clue as to who could have set the dead friar on the horse's back in such fashion. And because he made this confession, they spared him the torture of the strappado, but they condemned him to harsh imprisonment, and, furthermore, they sent their officer straightway to the bishop of the city to beg him to strip the friar in question of holy orders, resolving at the same time to deliver him over to the secular power, which might pass sentence upon him for homicide according to the commandment of the law.

It chanced that in these days King Fernando paid a visit to Salamanca, and during his stay there they related to him this story. Now, although he was a prince of marvellously proper carriage, and greatly grieved, moreover, at hearing of the death of one so noteworthy as Maestro Diego, nevertheless, overcome by the diverting humour of the episode, while hearing tell of the same in the company of his barons, he laughed so heartily thereat that he could scarce stand upright on his feet. And when the date was come when they must needs set about passing upon the friar the unjust sentence for the crime he had never committed, Messer Roderico, who was in sooth a gentleman of great integrity, and at the same time very well regarded by the king, stimulated by zeal for the truth and clearly convinced that his own silence would be the only reason for the infliction of such a wrong, at once made up his mind that he must die rather than keep hidden the truth concerning the deed. Wherefore, being in the presence of the king, where were also assembled divers barons and many other people, he spake thus: "My lord, the severe and unjust sentence pronounced against this innocent minor friar, together with the real circumstances of the case, induce me to give an explanation of the occurrence in question. And now, if your majesty will grant pardon to the man who dealt out to Maestro Diego the death he richly deserved, I will bring him here into this presence, and let him relate to you upon approved evidence and in full detail how the deed may have come about." The king who was both a very merciful man and one anxious to

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learn the truth, listened to this prayer for pardon in free and generous wise; and, as soon as he had received this assurance, Messer Roderico, in the presence of the king and of all the bystanders, gave a minute account from the beginning of the amorous passion of Maestro Diego for his wife, and of the letters and messages he had sent thereanent, and of all the other things devised and done by him in the matter up to the last hour of his life. The king, having already heard the statement of the young friar—a statement which seemed to him to be fully in harmony with the words which had just been spoken—and holding Messer Roderico to be a gentleman of worth and honour, without any further examination of him at once gave credit to the words he had just listened to. Then, all amazed as he was, he spent much time and trouble in turning over in his mind the nature of this strange and complicated affair, laughing heartily to himself the while. However, in order not to allow the undeserved sentence which had been passed upon the innocent friar to take effect, he made them bring him and the superior as well into his presence. Then, before his barons and nobles and all the other people who were there, he made it clear and manifest in what fashion the whole business had been brought to pass. For this reason he gave command that the friar, who had been condemned to suffer a cruel death, should forthwith be set at liberty, and the friar, when this had been done, and his name purged of all stain, took his way back to the convent rejoicing greatly. Messer Roderico, having been pardoned at the same time, was extolled with the highest praise in all the parts round about for that he had wrought such a deed. And thus the wonderful report in a very brief space of time was noised through all the kingdom of Castile by swift flying rumour, causing men to rejoice amain as they listened thereunto. The same report, having been carried from those parts into these our regions of Italy, had already been told, albeit briefly, to you, O most puissant king and lord; and now it is my grateful duty, by following your commands, to make it worthy of lasting remembrance, a merit it may be held to possess if one will closely examine the outward features thereof.

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MASUCCIO

BOTH the quality and the method exhibited in the strange and novel and unforeseen chances of the story I have just told to you, most illustrious lady,* will, I doubt not, give you and all other listeners occasion to declare (after laughing thereanent as much as is meet) that our Maestro Diego got the return he richly deserved for the fervent passion which consumed him. And besides this, it seems certain to me that some will be found to maintain that, if he had chanced to be a spiritual brother or even one of the Observantists, he would never have come to such a pass of unbridled lasciviousness, and, by the consequence thereof, have met an end so gloomy and terrible. And although in other parts of this my little work I shall try to do full justice, by bringing before your notice these gross he-goats, and by answering for their deeds—by distinguishing between the life and works of Conventuals and Observantists;† nevertheless it occurs to me that it might be well now to touch somewhat briefly on this subject, by affirming that it would without doubt be much better for the whole of Christianity, if we had on earth no other religion besides that which Christ left behind him by the instrumentality of his glorious apostle, St. Peter. And because this has been partially corrupted in the lapse of time, even the ministers thereof, and also the brothers who are called Conventuals, show us clearly by their conduct how, and to what extent, we ought to guard ourselves against them, forasmuch as their outward seeming, and their garb, and their gait, and all the works of their hands, are but so many terrifying voices and clamours crying out: "Put not your trust in us." And for this reason, all those who are of the fine flower of intellect will judge the matter truly, and tell us how we ought not merely to hold blameless, but rather to praise highly, all those who refuse to go about with bent necks in mean garb and with a hypocritical face in order to deceive others: But supposing that to these men, who walk abroad

* Ippolita, Duchess of Calabria. † See Note, p. 19.

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clad as gentle lambs while they are in sooth very wolves in soul, there should be granted the same opportunity which came to Maestro Diego, I do not for a moment doubt but that they would take good care to set about debauching our households as often as chance might permit. May God help those foolish laymen who are so meagrely endowed with wit that they know not how to recognize these crowds of sham friars and monks, who have borrowed their art from lying mountebanks, and go wandering abroad through divers kingdoms and countries preaching all new fashions of fraud—idling, thieving, and wantoning, and, when all other arts fail them, they feign to be saints* and to exhibit their power as miracle-workers. One comes with the waistcoat of San Vincenzo,† another adopts the rule of San Bernardino,‡ and another brings forward the ass-halter of Capestrano.§ In these, and in a thousand other diabolical ways, they

* Orig., "*se fingono santi.*" Masuccio is probably alluding to certain hangers on to the numerous religious revivals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One of the most noteworthy of these revivalist leaders was the Dominican monk, Fra Giovanni of Vicenza, who began to preach in Bologna in 1233. Amidst all the discord and bloodshed which then desolated Italy, he preached chiefly peace and the forgiveness of injuries. He then visited Padua, and most of the Lombard cities, and at last set to work to pacify and unite all these in one political bond. His head seems to have been turned by the marvellous success which met his efforts, for he began to burn religious opponents as heretics in Padua, whereupon the people rose against him. He was deposed from his leadership, and sank into obscurity.

† San Vincenzo (Ferrier) was born at Valentia in 1355, and joined the Dominicans as a preacher. Peter of Luna detected his abilities, and took him to Paris with him in 1391. When Peter became pope as Benedict XIII., he made Vincenzo his confessor, but the friar was soon disgusted with the sloth and corruption of Avignon, and in 1397 resumed his preaching. He travelled all over western Europe. At the Council of Constance he urged the deposition of the three popes, though one of them was his patron. He died in 1419, and was canonized in 1455.

‡ See Note to Novel XVI.

§ Fra Giovanni da Capestrano was a Franciscan Observant who opened a revivalist campaign at Brescia in 1451, and wrought many marvellous cures. See Muratori, "Istoria Bresciana," vol. xxi., p. 865.

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encroach upon our possessions and honours. And although these doings of theirs re-echo in every place, and the report of them is blown about through the whole universe, nevertheless, in the following fable dedicated to that most serene prince your very worthy consort, I will farther tell you of a strange cheat which a certain Dominican friar, a child of the devil, put upon the person of an illustrious German lady under the guise of holiness. And from the end of this my story we shall be able to adduce the argument that, the straighter and loftier the trees these wretches attack, the more boldly and audaciously will they lay on with their felling axes, in order to bring the trunks down to earth. All this I will show to you clearly.

THE END OF THE FIRST NOVEL.

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Novel the Second

ARGUMENT

A DOMINICAN FRIAR PERSUADES MADONNA BARBARA THAT SHE WILL FIND HERSELF WITH CHILD BY A CERTAIN RIGHTEOUS MAN, AND WILL IN DUE TIME BRING FORTH THE FIFTH EVANGELIST. BY MEANS OF HIS FRAUD, SHE BECOMES PREGNANT BY HIM; AND THEN HE, UNDER THE COVER OF A FRESH DECEIT, MAKES GOOD HIS FLIGHT. THIS DEED HAVING COME TO LIGHT, THE FATHER OF BARBARA MARRIES HER TO A MAN OF MEAN ESTATE.

TO THAT MOST SERENE PRINCE, ALFONSO OF ARAGON, THE MOST WORSHIPFUL DUKE OF CALABRIA *

EXORDIUM

DIVERS people there are, my most serene lord, who, being filled with the desire to put on a semblance of wisdom and integrity, and, with the idea of letting themselves be regarded by the herd of common people as good men and richly endowed with virtue, are wont to hold conversation with those who have taken upon themselves the religious habit, and to show themselves to the eyes of the multitude spitting out their paternosters and browsing at the feet of the saints. In what measure the men who employ such means as these are defiled by nefarious crimes and the most wicked vices, all those who may have come into close commerce with them will be able to vouchsafe, simply by giving true testimony of what they know. By false knaves of this sort I am blown upon,

* Son of King Ferdinand, who died in 1494, and husband of Ippolita Sforza, to whom Masuccio dedicated the Novellino. He renounced the sovereignty of Naples in 1495, and died the same year. He was born in 1448, and was known by the nickname of "Il Guercio," the squint-eyed.

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"The Dead Rider."

FROM A PAINTING BY E. R. HUGHES.

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bitten, and lacerated without ceasing, because, as they maintain, I have set my pen and my tongue to work in such fashion that I seem able neither to write nor speak at all except to bear witness against the friars. These men, in sooth, affirm that the greater part of the friars are duly obedient to the rules of their orders, and though here and there a wicked man may be found amongst the brethren, the vast quantity of good friars we see around us will in itself prove a stubborn fact to show that the number of them is practically infinite. And, as I have no desire to win the good word of these muttering hypocrites, I will hereby make answer to them in terms which will serve for ever, and tell them that the plain and open villainies worked by these malignant clerics, every day and in every place, with some fresh cunning, some new trick, confirm without ceasing the truth of my words. And from all such men as are lovers and fair judges of truth and honesty these assertions of mine will win a lasting reward of praise.

It occurs to me, therefore, my most gracious lord, to say with regard to this subject that it would be vastly more easy to find a given hundred soldiers, the half of whom should be good and worthy men, than to pick out of a whole chapter of friars a single one without some ugly stain upon him. But, supposing that the number of worthy friars may be ever so much greater than that of the worthless, the issue thereof would be no less an evil, in like manner as it often comes to pass in a perilous battle, during the course of which it may happen that a single mean coward will work mischief greater than is the good which arises from the feats of ten brave men. And in exactly similar wise would fare any ill-starred layman who might chance to give to such a treacherous crew any more faith than is necessary, seeing that aught of intercourse or familiarity with a single perfidious, secret-working, and ribald friar will bring upon us an amount of overwhelming shame and loss far greater than any honour and profit we might draw from the intimacy with a hundred just men.

Against all such as these—and to serve as their well-deserved and eternal punishment—it seems to me there is naught else to be said but to pray that God may soon make

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an end of Purgatory, so that these friars, being no longer able to live by the offerings made to them thereanent, may be forced to go and work with the mattock, thus returning to an estate from which the greater part of them have sprung. But in any case I desire in this most veracious story of mine—a story which I have addressed to you as my earthly master—to withdraw myself somewhat from the consideration of the general offences of the friars, and by descending to tell of one particular person, to show you in what wise a certain preaching friar, a man accounted of singular excellence amongst the Dominicans, contrived by the means of a strange cheat to capture in his subtle snares one of the most illustrious ladies to be found in all Germany.

THE NARRATIVE

THERE is in the mouths of men a story approved by a sufficient show of truth, which tells how, in years only a short time past, there lived in Germany a nobleman of high estate called by name the Duke of Lanzhueta,* a man wealthy in lands, and in precious stones, and in other possessions of this sort beyond any other baron of Germany. To this gentleman fortune had granted the gift of one only daughter, to whom he gave the name of Barbara, and she, as she was the single child of the house, was loved by her father with a deep and single love. In like manner, the extraordinary beauties of her person were celebrated and held in high esteem in all parts of the empire. Now this damsel, while she was yet of tender age, inspired peradventure by the Holy Spirit, or moved now and again thereto rather by some childish fancy than by any regular desire, promised by a solemn vow on her part that she would keep herself a virgin as long as her life should last, and thus, having dedicated her virginity to Christ and decked herself with all virtues and praiseworthy manners, so that she seemed to the eyes of the world as one overgone in devotion, she came to the marriageable age.

* Query, Landshut in Bavaria.

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When it was made known to her that divers noble barons were proffering requests with no little importunity to her father to gain her hand in marriage, it seemed to her that of necessity she would be constrained to make known this inclination of hers; wherefore, in a manner entirely befitting the occasion, she informed her father, and her mother as well, of the same, but they both of them could only bring themselves to listen to news of this character with great harshness of demeanour and with much arguing thereanent. And, howbeit they used their wits as best they could, with many threats and with allurements also, to make her draw back from the course she was so obstinately set to follow, they knew well enough how firmly she was bent on treading the path upon which she had entered, and on this account, plunged in sorrow such as they had never before tasted, they determined to bring the matter to a peaceful issue, and to set down such an accident to the charge of nature.

As soon as Barbara had let appear what her inclination really was, and had caused to be set up in her chamber an oratory fashioned in very devout wise, she not only gave herself over to perpetual prayer, but vexed and mortified her delicate body with fastings and discipline after a manner which was a wonder to behold. The fame of so great sanctity soon spread itself abroad in the upper and the lower parts of Germany, and in these regions of Italy as well, and on account of this report in a very short time an innumerable multitude of religious persons, and of other people likewise, came together round about the city where dwelt the duke aforesaid. These people put forward all manner of excuses to account for their presence, and, in exactly the same way as the vultures and famishing wolves run after decaying carcasses, these human birds and beasts of prey did their best to win as booty both the fame and the fortune of so illustrious and extraordinary a lady.

Now amongst these there came a certain rascally friar, whose name I either do not know or do not wish to make public; indeed, for certain reasons of decency I intend to keep silence as to whether he was an Italian or a German. This man, forsooth, being a brother of the Domini-

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can order, had gained much renown as a skilful preacher, and, using in most arrant wise the arts of a charlatan, he went rambling from place to place in Germany, which is, as you know, a rude and barbarous country, carrying with him the handle of the knife with which Saint Peter Martyr was slain, and other trifles, reputed relics of their San Vincenzo, and making it appear to the crowd of gulls he attracted that he wrought divers wonders with his unbounded and miraculous power.

It chanced that the fame of this man was brought to the notice of Madonna Barbara, a thing which he himself greatly desired to come to pass, having taken due foresight to attain this same end. Whereupon she, being mightily anxious to see him, sent word for him to come to her. The friar, not forgetting to put in practice all his wonted mummery, set out quickly to obey her summons, and, after the lady had given him reception, and honoured him as a saint, she made known to him the unchangeable resolution she had adopted, begging him at the same time that he would, of his kindness, give her counsel, and ending with a prayer for his aid towards the salvation of her soul. The friar, who was both young and robust in body, no sooner looked upon the beauty of the lady—which forsooth was more divine than human—than he fell straightway in love with her, and, for the reason that he felt himself now so sharply assailed by lustful desire, it wanted but little more to cause him to fall into a swoon at the very sight of her; nevertheless, having recollected his wits, he gave the most admirable commendation to the holy resolution she had formed, praising and blessing continually divine providence for having chosen to take so worthy a virgin out of this guileful world. Moreover, he argued before her parents that a character and disposition so perfect as was that of their daughter had not been created for their benefit alone, but for the profit of all womankind, present and future as well. Likewise he persuaded her, seeing that her intercourse with people of the world might be fraught with danger to his purpose, that she ought to set herself apart from the world in a society of ladies, who should be virgins likewise; putting herself under obedience to some religious order, in such

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wise as to cause to be formed another choir of virgins upon the earth, who would be ever at the service of Christ Jesus.

Now after he had held much converse with the damsel herself, and with the duke and his wife as well, and had made it appear to them all that the advice he gave was the best that could be given, holy in its character, built on the foundation of true reason, and such as would surely bring consolation to Madonna Barbara, the friar in a very short space of time persuaded them to let build a vast and magnificent monastery, which, according to his wish, was called after the blessed Catherine of Siena, and settled in such wise that the governance thereof might never fall into strangers' hands. In this house, together with Madonna Barbara, a great multitude of damsels of noble birth secluded themselves from the world, and there, under the ordinances and rules laid down by the aforesaid friar, they began to establish a very sanctified and perfect way of life—living in such wise, indeed, that no other than God, who alone knows the hidden secrets of all hearts, would have been able to find out that, by the working of the tainted soul of one wicked wretch, the great devil himself had already taken bodily possession of them. This fellow, in order to become privy to every inward thought of the young maidens, never ceased to exhort and persuade them that, in order to flee from the temptations of God's great adversary, there was to be found no course so meet and salutary as the constant resort to the holy practice of confession. Wherefore, fully carrying out this direction without suspecting aught of the great and hidden malignity which lay behind it, they set up a ravening wolf as the pastor of their gentle flock. He, being now well assured that he had baited his hook in the right way, perceived that the time had come to put in operation his lustful and nefarious design; so, having by cunning means got into his possession a certain little book belonging to Madonna Barbara, in which were written divers prayers of a very devout character, together with figures of the saints and of the Holy Ghost, he wrote therein, late on a certain evening, the following words in letters of gold, coming as it were out of the mouth of the Blessed Spirit: "Barbara, thou shalt find thyself with

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child by a righteous man, and shalt bring forth the fifth evangelist, who will give to us whatever may be wanting in the writings of the others; spotless thou shalt remain, and blessed shalt thou be in the sight of God." Having done this, he closed the book, and early the next morning he put it back in the place whence he had taken it the night before. Likewise he got ready many other slips of paper, dainty blue in colour, and inscribed in letters of gold with words of a similar nature. Having put these aside, he waited to make use of them in such a way as would best serve the purpose he had in view.

Barbara, having gone into her cell at the accustomed hour to recite the prayers she was wont to use, and having turned over the leaf whereupon was figured the Holy Ghost, perceived what manner of words had been there written afresh, and was utterly confounded at the sight which met her eyes. But after a little, having gathered together her wits somewhat, and having mastered the meaning of this awesome announcement, she felt herself assailed by no little wonder and confusion and anguish. She then set herself to read it over again, ever finding greater travail as she went on, and even became as one bewildered in her youthful, girlish, and as yet unsullied mind. Wherefore, wonder-stricken as she was, she tore herself away from the prayers she had just begun to say, and ran as quickly as she could to her spiritual father. And when she had drawn him somewhat aside, the maiden, conquered and overcome by girlish fears, showed to him the book with the gilded writing therein, weeping plentifully the while. Directly this met the eyes of the friar, he made a great show of being altogether stupified with amazement, and, having signed himself with the sign of the cross, he addressed Barbara in these words: "My daughter, in my belief this thing is naught else than a temptation of the devil, who, ill pleased at the sight of your state of perfect righteousness, is seeking to set before you some perilous snare, in order to cause you to fall into eternal perdition. Wherefore I now admonish you, on behalf of God Himself, and of the sacred obedience you owe to Him, that you never, at any time whatsoever, lend a believing ear to this or to aught else of

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a similar character. Nevertheless, I commend you highly for that you have laid this thing bare to me. But you must be careful always to act in like manner for the future. Of this I assure you, and I lay it upon you as a penance, to carry out my commands, for be well assured the snares which have been lately set to catch your soul will not be likely to become harmless* except you make use of the well-tried remedy of holy confession. But by the help of this you shall go forth strong and enduring, ready to do battle with the accursed enemy of God; so that in the end you will win for yourself a double palm of victory, seeing that your strength will make itself perfect in weakness."

Thus with these, and with many other words of a like sanctimonious character, he let her spirit quiet itself somewhat from the agitation which his carefully-devised trickery had produced, and having gone out of her presence, he called to him a certain young clerk, according to a plan which he had already formed, and made this fellow hide himself within side the oratory set up in the lady's chamber, giving him at the same time certain of the slips of paper of which mention has already been made, and directing him how and at what time he must send them forth to do their work. The gracious maiden, after she had gone into her chamber and set herself to prayer, beseeching God with all humility of heart that He would duly give her advertisement of any such event, was all of a sudden surprised at seeing one of these slips of paper fall into her lap. Having taken this in hand and read it, and remarked how richly adorned it was, and how it bore on its face words of a like purport in confirmation of the incarnation of a new evangelist, she fell at once into a violent fit of trembling. When she had risen from her knees and made ready to depart, she saw fall down a second missive, and then a third; indeed, before she left the place, there descended of these no less than ten. Then she went forth from the chamber, overcome with the direst fear, and called the friar, and, half dead with agitation, showed him the aforesaid pieces of paper. This wolf in

* Orig., *che si fatte insidie sopra dite non abbiano a dormire.*

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holy garb, letting his visage give token of the amazement which, as he feigned, possessed him, then said: "My daughter, of a truth these be things to raise in our hearts the greatest possible wonder. Such things may not be passed over without taking the most serious counsel thereanent; forasmuch as it is quite as likely that they are being revealed to us by divine inspiration as by the opposing principle. Wherefore it seems to me that we ought neither to let ourselves run heedlessly after this belief, nor to keep ourselves obstinately fixed in our original opinion, but rather that we should apply ourselves to the blessed exercise of prayer; you on one part, and I on the other, will lift up our prayers to God and beg Him that, of His supreme and infinite goodness, He will deign to give us clear assurance whether this revelation be true or whether it be false, whether we ought to give heed to it or to flee therefrom. Moreover, on the morrow it is my intention to hold a celebration in your chamber, when, by the instrumentality of the wood of the true and holy cross, and of other relics fitted for the purpose, we will put to flight all the works of the devil, and will see what thing Almighty God will show to us."

To Madonna Barbara it seemed that all this advice given by the friar was most godly, and worthy to be carried out. Wherefore she made answer that it would please her mightily to follow all his counsels. And when the next morning had come, the friar got up in good time, and set in position all his artillery in order to pay his oblation to Satan. Then, having first given the signal to the young clerk that he should betake himself to the spot where he had before stationed himself, the friar entered the chamber of the lady, being received by her with tokens of deep reverence, and with a seeming of sanctity and devotion he began to celebrate mass. As long as the holy office went on, from the beginning thereof until the end, the young clerk did not cease from casting down the aforesaid slips of paper, of which his master had given him no small quantity to be used in this fashion. The young girl, when she saw them thus put forth without ceasing, and in such vast numbers (and each one bearing to her the same message), and perceived that neither her prayers, nor her

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vigils, nor all the other forms of discipline she had practised, had worked for aught else than to confirm her in her belief, was fully persuaded that such a revelation as this could only come forth from the Holy Spirit. Wherefore, exulting within herself on account of this mighty fortune which had befallen her, she began to think of herself as blessed indeed, and furthermore believed that it was ordained that things should fall out for her in such fashion as was described on the slips of paper. When the mass was finished, and when she had duly gathered up the papers which had fallen down so finely both upon herself and upon the friar—papers which bore every mark of having been prepared and written by the hand of some blessed angel, she stood as one altogether possessed with joy and gladness.

The friar, to whom it seemed that the time had fully come when he might go and pluck the last and the most luscious fruit of so fertile a garden, now said: "My daughter, I see indeed, by reason of these signs, so numerous and so clearly manifested, that this thing is the will of God, and that any endeavours on our part to gain further assurance thereanent would be held to be nothing else than a presumptuous desire to pry more curiously into those things which spring from the divine intelligence, which, as thou mayst clearly see, is openly showing its desire to produce a treasure so precious from that thrice happy womb of thine. Therefore, if we should still show ourselves to be unbelieving, I fear mightily the divine judgment would come upon us. At all events, so as to have no further hesitation as to the final confirmation of this matter, let us see whether in any part of the Holy Scriptures there may be found aught predicted of the same."

Then, having taken up the Bible forthwith, and turned over the leaves to a certain place in which he himself had put a mark, he came upon the passage in the Gospel of John where it is written, "And in the presence of his disciples Jesus wrought many other wonderful works which are not written in this book." When he had read this, he turned to the lady and spake thus: "We have no need of any farther witness. Behold and see how all our doubts

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are smoothed down! Of a truth, this one shall he be, concerning whom our evangelist makes mention—he who shall furnish us with all these things in which the others are lacking. Wherefore, if we should now go on questioning over and above what is necessary, it may be charged against us as presumption, and I, forsooth, will leave this burden to be borne by you alone, if you should still show yourself incredulous." The damsel, making answer to these last words of his, said: "Alas! my father, why should this saying, which in sooth is known to you alone, keep shut up in your inner consciousness all my welfare and all my hope? However, I shall always be ready to carry this thing into effect in such measure as may seem to you fitting and desirable."

The friar, seeing that the business was now brought to such a pass that it only remained for him to give the finishing stroke to his work, said: "My daughter, you speak indeed with wisdom, but there yet hangs in my mind one doubt unsatisfied. It is this: how shall we set to work to find the person in whom we can place sufficient trust, and who will be fitted for this business, bearing in mind that the whole world swarms with men altogether given over to fraud and treachery?" Madonna Barbara, who was treating the matter with the utmost purity of mind; then made answer: "My father, these writings of ours tell us concerning this thing that he who is to be the maker of this one must be righteous and holy even as you yourself are, so I do not see who can better bring to pass this thing with me than you, especially as you are my spiritual father." To this the friar replied: "In truth I do not know how this deed can be wrought by me, seeing that I, as well as you, have promised to keep my body in chastity as long as I live. Nevertheless, it seems that I assuredly would be no just man were I to consent to allow your holy and most delicate flesh to be sullied by the touch of other hands; and, over and beyond this, I myself am well fitted and furnished for the increasing of the Christian religion. At the same time, I will not now neglect to remind you that you must never let yourself be carried away so as to speak of this thing to anyone; for I doubt not at all that God would hold it for no trifling sin

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"Madonna Barbara."

FROM A PAINTING BY E. R. HUGHES.

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if it were to come to the knowledge of anybody else. And in this case, whereas now you are justly held to be the most highly blessed woman of this our age, you would be turned into a foe and a rebel against God."

The gracious maiden, giving him no other answer than the most solemn promises, affirmed that as long as she lived she would never make known this thing to anyone. "Now leave me," said the friar, "and this same evening, without farther delay, we will make a beginning of this work; but because unions of this sort ought to be entered into for the praise and glory of the most high God, we must needs occupy ourselves with continual prayer until the hour of our coming together, in order that we may enter these holy and divine mysteries with devout minds."

With this conclusion to his speech he betook himself to his own chamber, after he had been graciously dismissed by Madonna Barbara, and considering well in his mind how from his fruitful loins the holy evangelist would take being, he did not allow himself that day to defile his body with coarse food, such as he was wont often to consume in order to deceive others by a show of holiness, but took for the invigorating of his flesh the most delicate viands, the most exquisite sweetmeats, and the most sumptuous wines, all in temperate measure.

At last, when the hour was come which had been awaited by him with such keen desire, he entered with cautious tread the chamber of Madonna Barbara, who, still fasting and bathed in tears, had never once given over praying, and now, when she beheld the friar, rose upon her feet and gave him worshipful reception. Now he, albeit he was all on fire with lust to take his pleasure of the lady, and that every moment until he should find himself in her loving arms seemed to him a thousand hours, made up his mind nevertheless not to set about the amorous sport with aught of hasty lasciviousness, but to begin by seeing for himself whether the damsel was as fair to look upon naked and in candle-light as she was when clothed by day. Wherefore he bade her to strip herself naked, and she, although feeling the while smitten and overwhelmed with the deepest shame, obediently did all that he bade

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her do. When she had taken off all her clothes, and when he had divested himself of the greater part of his habit, he let kindle two great torches, and, having placed the lady betwixt these, and casting his eyes upon her flesh, delicate and smooth as ivory, which with its brightness outshone even the light of the enkindled flambeaux, he felt himself filled and overcome with so great concupiscence that he let himself fall almost as one dead into her arms. Then, when he had recovered himself and placed himself before her on his knees, he made her be seated as if she were his sovereign lady, and with joined hands and bent head he thus spake: "Thee I adore, O most blessed womb, in which, in times soon to come, there will be generated that which will be the light of universal Christianity." And having thus spoken, and kissed her in the middle of her lilywhite loveliness, he fastened with greedy desire upon her sweet and rosy lips, and, without letting her go for a moment, he threw himself upon the bed, which had already been prepared, holding her in his arms. In what fashion they occupied themselves all the night through it may be figured by each without much difficulty; but I know well, according to what the lady said when, in after times, she told of what happened, that they attained not only the number of the fifth evangelist, but to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Madonna Barbara, although she took the repast provided for her only in a spiritual sense, nevertheless, when she considered the same in her mind, came to the conclusion that this thing was the sweetest and most delicious pleasure that mortals could take or taste; so in the end it happened, the sport being so mightily pleasurable, that every night they found themselves fresh and eager to recommence the amorous struggle until such time as they should be fully assured that the evangelist had indeed been begotten. Passing their time in these delights, it fell out before long that Madonna Barbara became with child, and when this fact made itself apparent to both of them by manifest signs, one day the friar, being in fear of his life should the thing be known, said to her: "My daughter, thou seest that, forasmuch as it has thus pleased God, the end desired by us so greatly is now fulfilled, and that thou,

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being pregnant, wilt, by God's pleasure, be duly brought to bed, on this account I am minded to take counsel with the Holy Father himself, and to announce to him the divine miracle which is about to ensue, for the reason that he may despatch hither a certain two of his cardinals, whose place it will be to canonize your offspring at his birth, and by this cause he will be esteemed of greater excellence and far above all other saints."

Madonna Barbara, who, as it has been already said, was of pure and simple mind, readily gave credence to these words, and, assailed by a fresh passion of vainglory, felt no little pleasure that such a course as this should be taken on her account. The friar, seeing clearly that the vessel containing the new evangelist waxed greater in size every day that passed, got everything in order to quit the place; and, having taken from her divers other meals of pastry to stay his failing stomach, and bidden her farewell with little pleasure or contentment, he set forth on his journey, and in a short time found himself in Tuscany. What other feats he may have wrought after this, and what regions he may have traversed in order to beguile others by his tricks and craft, let him search out who is not already possessed with indignation. And it can, I trow, be held as a sure and certain fact that this precursor of Antichrist, into whatever land he may have come in the course of his wanderings, made all those who may have lent credence to his words to have a taste of the divinity of the angels in Paradise. Concerning Madonna Barbara, whom he left pregnant behind him, and who waited for a long time in vain the coming of the promised cardinals, I do not feel myself obliged to go seeking what fate may have been in store for her, nor what may have happened to her on the birth of her child. I only know right well that of this kind are the fruits and the leaves and the flowers which will assuredly come forth from the conversation and intimacy of these cheating friars.

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I THEREFORE ask you what manner of human cleverness is there extant upon earth which shall be found sufficient for the warding off of the constant attacks such as we see delivered with all kind of deceit and treachery by these friars, whom I will never call holy men, but rather ministers of the chief of the devils? These same friars, having lately become aware of the fact that every man gifted with the flower of intellect must needs have full knowledge of the reprobate side of their corrupt lives, have, as a last remedy, schemed to pass themselves off as would-be saints. And in order that the devotees who favour them may be made to put faith in their manifest deceits, and so that the credulous may touch these frauds with their hands, I declare that these friars put forward certain creatures who have been plucked from the gallows and reduced to the last extremity of misery, and, having corrupted these with some small sum of money, they induce one to feign to be lame, another to be blind, and another to be oppressed by some incurable ailment or another. Wherefore, looking round and observing the dense and swarming crowd of ignorant people fascinated by their tricks, and not knowing what other thing to bring forward, they make a sign duly agreed upon before, for their gang of murderers to approach them, and these fellows, merely by touching the tassels of their robes and by the virtue of the relics which belonged (as the friars declare) to some departed saint of theirs, may be heard to proclaim with loud voices that a cure has been worked upon them simply by touching the holy preacher. Upon this they all cry out for mercy, bells are rung, long processes and authentic statements are drawn up, and by the means of such devilish working as this, the fame of such doings, spreading itself abroad and flying from one kingdom to another, forces even those men who can discern clearly enough the falsehood of the whole affair, to make believe that they take lies for the truth, forasmuch as were they to act otherwise they would be

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held and proclaimed to be heretics by the senseless multitudes and by the hypocrites. And over and above the experiences of these our days, which have been so clearly made manifest to us, we may well call to mind, as bearing on the truth of this matter, what has been taught to us in the preceding novel as to the manner of fruit we may expect to gather from their holiness. And albeit you must give in full measure your grief and pity to the noble lady aforesaid, on account of the suffering and betrayal put upon her by such a vile poltroon, nevertheless, the one which I now will let follow will not come to an end without giving you cause for much pleasure and merriment.

THE END OF THE SECOND NOVEL.

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Novel the Third

ARGUMENT

FRA NICOLO DA NARNI BEING ENAMOURED OF MADONNA AGATA, PROCURES FULFILLMENT OF HIS DESIRE. THE HUSBAND HAPPENING TO COME UPON THEM, THE WIFE DECLARES THAT THE FRIAR, BY THE VIRTUE OF CERTAIN RELICS, HAS DELIVERED HER OF A DISTEMPER WHICH AFFLICTED HER. BUT, HAVING FOUND THE FRIAR'S BREECHES AT THE HEAD OF THE BED, THE HUSBAND BECOMES DISTURBED IN HIS MIND, WHEREUPON THE WIFE ASSURES HIM THAT THE BREECHES FORMERLY BELONGED TO SAN GRIFFONE.* THIS THE HUSBAND BELIEVES, AND IN THE END THE FRIAR CAUSES THEM TO BE CONVEYED BACK TO THE CONVENT IN A SOLEMN PROCESSION.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS POET JOANNE PONTANO †

EXORDIUM

IF, most-noble-minded Pontanus, we ought to be as careful concerning the honour and profit of our true friends as concerning our own, I, although I, am only to be reckoned amongst the least of yours, am bound by every obligation to further your honour and well-being both by will and deed. Wherefore, knowing you to be adorned by so many peerless virtues that we may with justice call you the light of rhetoricians and the mirror

* The earlier editions give San Bernardino.

† Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, one of the most illustrious men of letters of the fifteenth century, was born in 1426, at Cerreto, near Spoletto. He studied at Perugia, and went in early manhood to Naples, where he attracted the notice of the celebrated Beccadelli (Panormita), the founder of the Neapoli-

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of poets—knowing likewise of the other excellent parts you possess in such unbounded measure, I cannot on any account keep silent when I see all these excellencies sullied by a single spot which might easily be wiped away. By this spot I mean to indicate that constant practice you have of holding intimate converse with monks and friars of every sort—a practice which, in a man of your integrity, is a greater and a more reprehensible failing than the hatching of a plot with a bond of heretics. Of the truth of what I say you yourself may be the judge, seeing that none others than usurers, fornicators, and men of evil condition are ever to be seen associating with them, and these, forsooth, seek their company chiefly in order that, by thus foregathering with hypocrites, they may learn how better to deceive their fellows. Therefore, seeing that you yourself are not a wolf, it is not seemly that you should line your cloak with a wolf's skin.* I pray you get yourself out of so reprobate and damnable a path, and, above all, be firm, not only to withdraw yourself entirely from the society of such as these, but also to drive them from your house for good, even as if they were people smitten by some contagious plague. By following such a course as this you will shake off from yourself all possibility of future suspicion, and will give these creatures no opportunity of approaching you through the doorway of your friendship, and of contaminating, as is their wont, those who are about you. Now, in order that I may never behold you rushing down such a precipice as this, I will point out to you (with whatever authority my words may carry, and as a supplement to the arguments given above,) a farther example for your future action in the following

tan Academy. By Beccadelli he was introduced to the notice of Alfonso the Magnanimous, and from this time onward he was continually in the royal service, either as tutor, secretary, or ambassador. His literary fame rests on his Latin verse, of which he was a voluminous writer. On the death of Beccadelli he became the head of the learned society of the capital, and it was perhaps rather from him than from his predecessor and patron that the Academy of Naples received its formal constitution. When Charles VIII. entered Naples, Pontano greeted him with a congratulatory oration, an easy transfer of allegiance which Guicciardini censures severely. He died in 1503.

* Orig., *non conviensi della sua pelle foder arsi il tuo mantello.*

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novel, which I have dedicated to you, and show you what recompense the friendship of a holy friar brought to a physician of Catania, who was addicted more than most men to the society of folk of this sort, and who, though he was of a very watchful and jealous nature, was deceived, and flouted likewise, by the subtle devices of his wife and of the friar.

THE NARRATIVE

CATANIA, as we all know well, is reckoned a noble and illustrious place amongst the other famous cities of the island of Sicily. There, in times not long past, resided a certain doctor of medicine, Maestro Rogero Campisciano by name, and this man, although he was full of years, took to wife a damsel called Agata, sprung from a very honourable family of the city beforenamed, who, according to the opinion current in the place, was the fairest and most graceful lady at that time living in the island. On this account her husband held her as dear as he held his own life.

Now because it very rarely or never happens that a man who is hotly in love escapes long from the plague of jealousy, this good doctor in a very short space of time became so jealous of his wife, without any other reason than the aforesaid, that he forbade her to hold converse with anyone, using just as great severity towards her friends and relations as towards strangers. And although he had very close relations with a community of friars minor in the city, being the keeper of their funds, the procurator of the order, and intimately acquainted with the whole course of their affairs, nevertheless, for the better safeguarding of his treasure, he commanded and laid a charge upon his wife that she should keep herself from all traffic with the friars, just as if they had been dissolute laymen. It chanced, however, in the course of time, that there arrived in Catania a minor friar called Fra Nicolo da Narni, who, though he put on the air of a hypocrite, and was wont to walk clattering along with a pair of wooden

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sandals like prison shackles, with a leather patch on the breast of his frock, with bent neck, and a gait fitted for the canting knave he was in sooth, was nevertheless a fresh-coloured, comely young fellow. And besides this, he had studied at Perugia,* and had gained considerable knowledge of the doctrine there taught; was a far-famed preacher, and already enrolled as a fellow of the confraternity of San Bernardino—a fact he never failed to make known to any one he might meet. He declared, moreover, that he had in his possession certain relics of this saint, by the virtue of which God had already shown, and still continued to show, many miracles. On account of this, and of the devout name enjoyed by his order, he drew to his preaching a marvellous great crowd of listeners, and in this wise it happened that, on a certain morning when he was preaching, he espied amongst the crowd of women in the church the aforesaid Madonna Agata, who seemed to him to be as a carbuncle stone in the midst of a mass of the whitest pearls, and, letting fall upon her many glances from the tail of his eye without in any way interrupting his sermon, he said to himself over and over again that the man who should be held worthy to enjoy the love of such a beautiful young woman might indeed reckon himself most fortunate. Agata, as was the wont of all those who came to hear the preaching, kept her eyes steadily fixed on the preacher in admiration, and, since he appeared to her to be a young man comely beyond ordinary, she breathed a wish to herself (without letting her thoughts run into any undisciplined excess of lust) that her husband were made more in the likeness of this handsome friar, and at the same time she began to think and to deliberate that she would like to go some day to make confession to Fra Nicolo. And thus, holding fast to this conceit of hers, as soon as she saw him come down from the pulpit she threw herself in his way, and besought him that he would vouchsafe to hear her. The friar, though he was inwardly overjoyed at her request, made answer to her, so as not to allow the corruption of

* Perhaps this mention of Perugia may be satirical on Masuccio's part, Pontano, to whom this novel is dedicated, having been educated there.

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his mind to show itself on his countenance, that it was no part of his duty to hear confessions. Whereupon the lady replied: "But may not I, for the sake of Maestro Rogero, my good husband, ask to enjoy some privilege at your hands?" To this the friar answered: "Ah, then you are the wife of our procurator? For the respect I bear to him I will willingly listen to your confession." And when they had withdrawn themselves somewhat aside, and the friar had taken up his position in the place where they were accustomed to hear confessions, and the lady had gone down on her knees before him, she began to confess herself according to the accustomed rule. After she had laid bare a certain portion of her offences, telling the friar of the inordinate jealousy of her husband, she begged him of his kindness to let her know if there were any means within his power by which he could manage thoroughly to clear out of her husband's head all such delusions as these, believing perhaps that such ailments might be healed by herbs and plasters as her husband was wont to heal the sick folk under his charge. The friar set gladly to work to take into consideration a proposition such as this, for it seemed to him that now his good fortune was about to open for him the door which would give him the means of entering the path he so keenly desired to tread; wherefore, after he had given Madonna Agata consolation in somewhat flowery terms, he thus answered her: "My daughter, it is no marvel that your husband should be so jealous of you; indeed, were his mood otherwise, he would be held by me, and by every other man as well, to be something less than the prudent gentleman he is. Nor ought he to be charged with fault on this account, seeing that this circumstance arises solely from the working of Nature, who, having produced you adorned with so great and angelic loveliness, has rendered it impossible that anyone should ever be the possessor of you without suffering the sharpest pangs of jealousy."

The lady, smiling somewhat at these words, saw that the time had now come when it behoved her to return to the attendants who were awaiting her; so after certain other soft words had been spoken, she begged the friar to give her absolution. He therefore, having heaved a deep sigh,

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turned towards her with a pitiful countenance, and thus made answer: "My daughter, no one who is himself bound can give release to another, and for the reason that you in so short space of time have made me a slave, I can neither absolve you, nor loose myself, without aid from you." The courteous lady, who was by birth a Sicilian, quickly comprehended the real meaning of this ambiguous speech, remarking besides what a good-looking young fellow he was, and feeling no small gratification that he seemed to be so mightily taken by her beauty. Still she was somewhat surprised to find that friars took thought of such matters, because, on account of her youth and the careful guard kept over her by her husband, she had not only been kept from all dealing with religious persons of every sort, but had even been made to believe that the making of men into friars differed nought from the making of cocks into capons. However, she saw clearly enough that Fra Nicolo was more of a cock than a capon, and with a longing such as she had never before known, and with the firm resolve to give him her love at all hazard, she thus answered him: "My father, leave all your cares to me, forasmuch as I, coming here a free woman, must now return home the slave of you and of love." To this speech the friar replied, his heart filled with the greatest joy he had ever known: "Since then our desires run towards the same point, can you not devise some way by which we both of us, breaking forth at the same moment from this cruel prison, may taste the full joy our lusty youth permits?" To this she answered that she would willingly agree to this, supposing that a way could be found for its accomplishment, adding these words: "And now at this moment I am reminded of a plan whereby, in spite of the inordinate jealousy of my husband, we may be enabled to carry out our intention. For you must know that almost every month I am wont to be afflicted with a very grave distemper of the heart, so severe that it robs me of all power of sensation, nor up to this present time have I been able in the least degree to remedy the same by any device of the physicians. Indeed, certain women of experience in such matters have declared that my ailment proceeds from the womb, because I am young and fit to bear chil-

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dren, but by reason of the age of my husband I am not able to do this. Wherefore I have thought that on one of those days when my husband goes to ply his calling in the country, I might feign to be taken ill with one of my accustomed attacks. Then, having sent for you in haste, I might beg you to lend me certain relics of San Griffone, and you, on your part, must be prepared to come with them to me secretly; and afterwards, by the aid of a very trusty maid of mine, we can meet and take our pleasure together."

To this the friar, overjoyed, replied: "My daughter, may you be blessed by God for the excellent plan you have devised. It seems clear to me that we are in duty bound to carry it out, and I forsooth will bring with me a certain good friend of mine, who will not let your trusty waiting-woman complain that she is neglected while we are enjoying ourselves." Then, having spent some time over the conclusion of the business, they parted with many warm and amorous sighs. As soon as she had returned home, the lady made known to her maid the plan she had devised with the friar for their common gratification and pleasure, whereupon the maid, who was mightily pleased at the news, made answer that everything her mistress might command should straightway be prepared.

It chanced that fortune was very kind to them, forasmuch as the very next morning Maestro Rogero betook himself to visit his patients outside the city, according to the prescient surmise of his wife, who at once, in order to let no delay interfere with the course of the affair, began to call upon San Griffone to come to her aid, feigning to be afflicted with an attack of her customary distemper. Then straightway the maid addressed her, as if by way of counsel: "Why do you not send for those sacred relics of the saint which have such miraculous fame amongst men of all sorts?" Thereupon the lady, according to the plan they had arranged between themselves, making believe that she could speak only with great difficulty, turned towards the maid, and spake thus: "Nay, I beseech you to send and fetch them," and to her the woman, as if she were filled with pity, replied: "I will go myself for them." So, having set forth at the top of her speed, and

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found the friar and given him the message which had been arranged, Fra Nicolo, together with a certain companion of his, a sprightly young fellow, and one well fitted for the business in hand, straightway set forth on his errand: When they were come into the chamber, and when Fra Nicolo, with a very devout look upon his face, had drawn anear the side of the bed upon which the lady was lying alone, she, who was tenderly awaiting him, received him with the greatest humility, and said: "O father, pray to God and to the glorious San Griffone on my behalf." To this the friar replied: "May the Creator make you worthy of what you ask; but you on your part must give evidence of devout behaviour, and if you are willing to accept His grace through the virtue of the holy relics I have with me, it is right and becoming that first we should resort with hearts full of contrition to the holy rite of confession, so that the soul, being brought back to health, the body may with ease be cleansed of its distemper." The lady answering, said: "Of a truth I have anticipated, and never wished for aught else than what you speak of, and this grace I beg most earnestly at your hands."

When they had thus spoken together, they gave courteous dismissal to all such persons as chanced to be in the chamber, so that there remained therein no one else except the maid and the companion who had come with the friar. Then, having securely locked themselves in, so that they might be in no danger of interruption, each lover began incontinently to raise the flame of desire with his lady. Fra Nicolo got upon the bed, and deeming that he might reckon on perfect security, took off his breeches in order that he might the better use his legs when freed from such impediment, and flung the garments aforesaid on the head of the bed. Then, having folded the lovely young woman in a close embrace, he began with her the sport so full of delight and so keenly desired by them both. The friar, who did not meet with such good luck every day of his life, gave full proof of his manhood, and once and twice reaped the full harvest of his desire; but, just as he was preparing for a third essay, he and Madonna Agata were made aware that Maestro Rogero on horseback was down below, he having come back sooner than they had

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anticipated from his journey. The friar in great haste flung himself off the bed, overcome with fear and vexation, and forgetting entirely the breeches which he had laid at the bed's head, while the waiting-woman, not at all pleased that the business she had begun with her swain must needs be abandoned, unfastened the door of the chamber, and, having called to the people who were waiting in the hall without, bade them come in at their pleasure, adding that, by the grace of God, her lady was now well-nigh entirely healed of her ailment, and praising God and San Griffone.

In this wise the matter stood when Maestro Rogero came into the chamber, and, as soon as he realized that something strange had happened, he was no less disturbed at finding that friars had begun to frequent his house than at the fresh indisposition of his beloved spouse; but she, observing at a glance that his humour was mightily changed, cried out: "Oh! husband, of a truth I should have been a dead woman by this time if our good father the preacher had not come to my aid with the relics of the most blessed San Griffone. These, as soon as he brought them near to my heart, took away all the pain and agony I suffered, just as a plentiful flood of water quenches a little fire." The credulous husband, when he heard how a remedy had at last been found for an ailment hitherto deemed incurable, fell a-thanking God and San Griffone with no small satisfaction, and at last, turning to the friar, gave him unbounded thanks for the great benefit he had wrought, and thus, after exchanging certain other speeches in devout and saintly discourse, the friar and his companion took their leave in the most seemly wise, and went their way back to the monastery.

Now, as they were walking along, Fra Nicolo began to feel somewhat cold about the breech, and then it came into his mind how he had left behind him at the head of the bed the garment he usually wore; whereupon, overcome beyond measure with grief and confusion, he turned to his companion and told him of the accident which had befallen him. His friend consoled him as best he could, and bade him cease from disquieting himself, forasmuch as the maid, who would be the first to find the breeches

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would assuredly hide them, and, laughing as he spoke, added these words: "My master, it is quite clear that you are not wont to put up with inconvenience of any sort, since it seems that you needs must, wherever you may be, straightway clap clothing upon those parts of yours. But perhaps you follow the example of the Dominican friars, who always take their dogs about with them unconfined by leash of any sort, and, although they often get fine sport, it is nevertheless a fact that hounds that are leashed are always keener and more holding in their grip when they come upon game." To this the friar replied: "What you say is true enough, but would to God that no scandal may arise on account of the fault I have committed; and, tell me, how did you fare with the prey I let fall into your clutches? For my own part, I know that in my hawking I managed to capture a brace of partridges, and, just as I was trying for a third, Messer Rogero came back." His friend answered: "I am no smith myself; but what do you say of a workman who managed to make two nails out of one heating of the furnace, and had got one finished complete, and the other only lacking the head thereto, when the girl, cursing the hour she was born, cried out, 'Here is the maestro at the door'? And thus the work which you had put in my way was left incomplete." Said the friar: "May God be willing to grant me leave to go back to the sport I was forced to give over, and then you, too, if you should still be in the mood therefor, may turn out your nails by the hundred." To this the friend replied: You will not find me wanting, but in sooth I believe the feathers of those two partridges you took are worth more than all the nails they make in Milan." At this speech the friar laughed heartily, and with many other witty words concerning their late adventure, they went on, joking between themselves.

As soon as the friars had left the chamber, Maestro Rogero, going close up to his wife's side and caressing her neck and her bosom, demanded to know from her whether the pain which had molested her had caused her great suffering. In the course of their conversation over this and over other matters, it chanced that Maestro Rogero, stretching out his hand to compose the pillows under his

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wife's head, caught hold of the laces of the breeches which the friar had left there.

When he had drawn them forth, and observed of a surety they were of the sort commonly worn by friars, he cried out with a face changed mightily: "What the devil can be the meaning of this? O Agata! for what reason are these friar's breeches here?" But the young wife, who was very wary and prudent (and love, moreover, had recently aroused yet more her intelligence), made answer without delaying her speech a moment: "And what can be the meaning of the long story I have just told you, my husband, if these be not the miraculous breeches which formerly belonged to the glorious San Griffone, and which our good father, the preaching friar, brought hither this morning as one of the most famous relics of the saint? Wherefore Almighty God, by the virtue of these, has already shown me great favour, and though I was fully assured of being entirely freed from my trouble, yet for greater security, and for piety's sake as well, I besought Fra Nicolo, when he was about to take it away, that he would leave it with me until the time of vespers, at which hour he or some others should send for it." The husband, when he heard this answer so ready and so well fitted for the occasion, either believed it in truth or made as if he believed it; but, having within him the nature of a jealous man, his brain was buffeted about without ceasing by the two contrary winds which this accident had stirred up; nevertheless, without giving any farther answer to the remarks of his wife, he held his peace. The wily young woman, being well assured that her husband was still somewhat disturbed in his mind, now began to scheme how she might by a new stratagem clear out entirely from his breast all the suspicious thoughts he there nursed; so turning towards her maid, she said: "Go now at once to the convent, and as soon as you shall have found the friar preacher, tell him to send and fetch the relics which he left with me, for by God's mercy I have had no occasion to use them more." The discreet waiting-woman, comprehending fully what the lady in truth wanted to say, went with all speed to the convent, and bade them quickly summon the friar preacher, who came straightway to the door;

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"A Relic of San Grijjone."

FROM A PAINTING BY E. R. HUGHES.

"A Relic of San Grijjone."

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deeming peradventure that she had come to bring back the keepsake which he had left behind him. But he put on a smiling face as he spake to her, and asked her what news she bore. "No good news, in sooth," she answered, with a very ill grace, "thanks to your carelessness, and it would have been worse but for the prudence of my mistress." "Tell me what it is," cried the friar; and then the girl related to him, point by point, all that had happened, adding that it seemed to her there was no better way out of the affair than that they should send from the monastery to fetch the aforesaid relics with a certain parade of ceremony without further delay. Then the friar said, "Keep your mind at ease;" and, having taken leave of her and bidden her to hope that all things which had been ill done would straightway be repaired, he sought out the superior, and spake to him in these words: "Good father, I have just committed a most grievous sin, one for which in due time you can punish me as I deserve, but just now I beseech you to give me instant help, as the needs of the case demand, in order that this mischance may be set right without delay," and then Fra Nicolo set forth the whole story in as brief a fashion as possible. The superior, finding himself perturbed in no small measure over the affair, took the friar sharply to task for his imprudence, and thus addressed him: "See now what comes of working miracles! A clever fellow you are, in sooth! You fancied, indeed, that you could go safely to work; but, if you found you must needs take off your breeches, could you not think of some other way of hiding them, either in the sleeves or in the breast of your gown, or in some other secret place about your person? You, wonted as you are to be mixed up in such scandals as these, recked naught as to the great burden of conscience and obloquy of the world with which we of your order shall have to battle. Of a truth I know not what reason there is why I should not forthwith send you to prison as you richly deserve. Nevertheless, seeing that at the present moment it behoves us to endeavour to mend matters rather than to inflict punishment, and that the affair concerns especially the honour of the order,

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we will postpone your chastisement to some future time."

Then, having set ringing the bell of the chapter house, and let assemble all the friars, the superior told them how, in the house of Maestro Rogero the physician, God had that very day wrought a most evident miracle by the virtue of the breeches which formerly belonged to San Griffone. Having told them the story in the fewest possible words, he persuaded them that it behoved them to go forthwith to the house of the aforesaid physician, and bring back therefrom the holy relic with high solemnities and a procession, whereby they might give honour and glory to God, and cause the miracles of the saint to be held in yet higher esteem.

When the friars were duly mustered and ranged two by two, they took their way towards the house in question with the cross at the head of the procession. The superior, clad in a sumptuous cope, bore the tabernacle of the altar on his arm, and marching along in silence they came to the physician's house. When Maestro Rogero became aware of their presence he went out to meet the superior, and demanded of him the cause of this unwonted visit, whereupon the latter, with a joyous face, made answer to him in terms he had before arranged: "Well-beloved Maestro, the rules of our order require that we should carry in secret the relics of our saint to the house of anyone who may wish to have them, and in like manner if it should happen that the sick person, through any failing of his own, should receive no benefit from the ministration, that we should privily fetch them home again in order that the fame of miracles should not be diminished thereby. But in cases in which God, through the means of the above-named relics, may have willed to exhibit miracles past gainsaying, it is our duty to fetch the holy relic back to our church with all the ceremony and splendour we can afford, thus proclaiming abroad the miracle which has been wrought, and recording it in public form. And for the reason that your wife (as you must already know) has been freed from the dangerous disease which afflicted her through the working of our relic, we are now come in this solemn fashion to bear it back to our

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house." The physician, when he marked how the whole congregation of friars was come thither with so great a show of devotion, at once settled in his mind that these holy men would never have gathered themselves together to work any ill purpose; so, accepting as gospel truth the fictitious reasons of the superior, and driving away entirely all suspicious thoughts from his mind, he spake thus: "In sooth, you are all right welcome;" and, having taken the friar preacher by the hand, he led him into the chamber where Madonna Agata still was. She, who had in no wise gone to sleep over the business, had now the breeches all ready, and wrapped in a white and perfumed linen cloth. The superior, when they were displayed to him, kissed them with the deepest reverence, and made the physician and the lady do the same, and in the end all those who were assembled in the room kissed them likewise. Next, after they had placed the breeches in the tabernacle which they had brought with them for that purpose, and after a sign had been given to the company, they all began to sing in unison *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and in this order, traversing the city and accompanied by a huge crowd, they bore the relic back to their church and there placed it above the high altar, letting it remain several days in order that all those who had already heard of the miraculous occurrence might pay their devotions to it. Maestro Rogero, being very keenly set on increasing the reverence of the people round about towards the order aforesaid, let pass no opportunity of telling the story to whatsoever gatherings of men he chanced to encounter as he went about his practice, both within and without the city, setting forth the solemn miracle which God had wrought through the healing power of the breeches of San Griffone. And while he occupied himself in the discharge of this office, Fra Nicolo and his friend in no wise forgot to make a fresh trial of that rich hunting-ground which they had already explored, to the great delight both of the mistress and of the maid. Madonna Agata, independent of any sensual delight she might enjoy, came to the conclusion that this operation was in truth the only one of any service to cure her acute attacks; for the reason that it brought relief to

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the very seat of her distemper. Besides this, being the wife of a physician, she had often heard tell of that text of Avicenna in which he lays down the dictum, "that those remedies which are approximate and partial may give ease, but those which are continuous will work a cure." Wherefore, having tasted both the one sort and the other with much delight, she was duly conscious that, through the opportune ministrations of the holy friar, she had been entirely freed of the incurable mother-sickness which had plagued her so long.

MASUCCIO

HOWBEIT the novel I have narrated above abounds in pleasurable entertainment, and may well be re-read and re-heard, nevertheless I would rather, if there be any repetition of the same, that it should take place in the presence of those who are wont to follow me up without ceasing with their bows ready bent, taunting me with bitter words and reproving me for writing against these false world-deceivers, in order that (putting aside the deceit practised and the adultery committed by this ribald monk) they might in their whisperings and murmurings give full consideration to the fact that this open heretic, this notorious despiser of Christ's faith and work and doctrine, should not only have willed, but should have dared indeed to place within the chosen vase and veritable receptacle of the most sacred body of the Son of God, a pair of stinking breeches, lousy, and filled with a thousand different kinds of dirt. Moreover, let any man read of Christ's supreme agony, and he will not find that the traitorous Jews, although they slew Him with the greatest iniquity and insult, ever cast upon Him contempt equal to that which I have described. Let the earth, therefore, open wide her mouth and swallow alive this swarm of dastardly wretches, together with all those who support them, not only as a punishment for present offences, but as a warning and eternal example for all future ungodly men who may be like unto them. However, so as not to allow

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for a moment that these grumblers, styled my adversaries, have any power to restrain me from saying, according to the style in which I have begun, what I in sooth think concerning these soldiers of Lucifer, I will further demonstrate—little as they may like it—how a most subtle scheme was taken in hand by two accursed friars in order that they might gather together money, and by means of their greed get made prelates. You may learn clearly how this was done by the exhibition of their fraudulent miracles which they made.

THE END OF THE THIRD NOVEL.

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Novel the Fourth

ARGUMENT

FRA GIROLAMO OF SPOLETO MAKES THE PEOPLE OF SORRENTO BELIEVE THAT THE BONE OF A CERTAIN DEAD BODY WHICH HE HAS GOTTEN IS THE ARM OF ST. LUKE. HIS ACCOMPLICE CONTRADICTS THIS STATEMENT, WHEREUPON FRA GIROLAMO PRAYS TO GOD THAT HE WILL DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF HIS WORDS BY THE WORKING OF A MIRACLE. THEN THE ACCOMPLICE FEIGNS TO FALL DOWN DEAD, AND FRA GIROLAMO BY PRAYER RESTORES HIM TO LIFE. HAVING BY THE FAME OF THIS DOUBLE MIRACLE COLLECTED A GREAT SUM OF MONEY, FRA GIROLAMO BECOMES A PRELATE, AND HEREAFTER LIVES A LAZY LIFE WITH HIS COMRADE.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MESSER ANTONELLO DE PETRUCIIS,* THE SOLE AND WELL-TRUSTED SECRETARY TO THE KING

EXORDIUM

DESIRING to make a beginning of my letter to you, I can but feel, my magnificent chief, that you—a very ocean of rhetorical style—must needs look upon my writing as nothing better than the vile bawling of a blind man of the common herd, even though the lyre

* Antonello de Petruciis was born of humble parentage at Teano. He was taken into the service of the state by Giovanni Olzina, the secretary of Alfonso the Magnanimous, and ultimately became secretary to Ferdinand I. Two of his sons perished in the conspiracy of the barons, and he himself was beheaded two years after in 1487. It is probable that the crime for which De Petruciis perished was his great wealth, since it was a maxim of Ferdinand to let his officials fatten themselves by extortion, and then after their judicial murder to seize upon their estates. In the edition of 1483, this novel is dedicated to Petruciis under the title of Messer Antonio d'Aversa.

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of Orpheus and the eloquence of Mercury should be granted to me. This, then, is the only reason why I have deferred until this present time to write the following novel; and now, being well assured that it is highly diverting and good of its kind, I have resolved to send the same to you, all unadorned and unpolished as it is. And although it happens that this particular story can be of little profit to you yourself, seeing that you have knowledge enough and to spare concerning the ways of the world, nevertheless, should it happen to be read by certain others, they will, I doubt not, take therefrom some most useful counsel. Peradventure it may appear to these to be a sufficient argument why they should guard themselves carefully against the new and fraudulent sect known as the Saints—people who with all manner of guileful arts and subtle frauds make pretence of performing miracles, and prepare the way to steal away from others their honour, their wealth, and their peace of mind as well. Now, although I do not anticipate that any eloquence would be of virtue sufficient to sum up the whole volume of the wickedness of these men, nevertheless, merely by culling one small flower out of a wide plain, I may cause you to comprehend fully the details of a deceitful trick practised by a certain minor friar—a trick against which, according to my judgment, no human shrewdness would have been of any service.

THE NARRATIVE

AT that time when the French King James,* heretofore known as the Count de la Marc, became the husband of the last princess of the house of Durazzo, there came to Naples a certain minor friar who was called by name Fra Girolamo da Spoleto; and this

* Jacques, Comte de la Marche et de Castres. In 1415 he married Queen Joanna II., and shortly after the marriage he caused certain of her favourites to be put to death, and tried to keep the queen herself a prisoner. A riot broke out, and he fell into the queen's hands, and was thrown into prison. He escaped, fled to France, and became a Franciscan friar.

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man, according to outward seeming, showed himself to be as holy as any of the saints, and was wont to spend the whole of his time as an itinerant preacher, not only in the city of Naples, but in the neighbouring towns as well. In all these places he acquired an amazing reputation and reverence.

Hence it happened that one day when he chanced to be at Aversa,* there was exhibited to him as a most wonderful spectacle the body of a certain knight well known to fame, which corpse many years before had passed into the keeping of a monastery of preaching friars. This dead body, either because it had been very well preserved, or peradventure on account of the temperate manner of life used by the knight while he was living, or for some other reason, was still in so sound and perfect a state, that not only was every bone thereof well settled in its right position, but the skin was in so little degree fallen to decay that, by touching the head, the lower parts of the body would move themselves. Sir Friar, as soon as he had well and carefully surveyed the sight before him, forthwith began to consider in his mind how he might contrive to get into his possession some member or other of the corpse aforesaid, in order that he might, by the aid of such member, to be styled by him a sacred relic, sweep into his purse hundreds and thousands of ducats. In the spending of these he deemed that he might not only live a life of lazy self-indulgence, but might even—as is the wont of such men—lay them out profitably enough to win for himself the rank of a prelate.

For, in sooth, if we take good inquisition of those round about us, we shall easily perceive how vast a number of friars have become prelates at the cost of luckless and witless laymen; this one rising to the post of inquisitor into heretical opinions, and that one becoming a collector of money for the furnishing of a crusade;† to say nothing of those others, who, by the instrumentality of papal

* Petruciis, to whom this novel is dedicated, was brought up at Aversa.

† Masuccio probably had in mind the attempt of Pius II. to promote a crusade for the recovery of Constantinople at the Council of Mantua in 1459.

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bulls, whether these be genuine or false, grant full remission of sins, or through the power of money make promises to gain for anyone a safe abode in Paradise; thus, by hook or by crook, winning for themselves a bellyful of florins, in spite of the fact that such traffic is expressly forbidden by the most sacred rules of their religion.

But we will now return to our brother Girolamo. As soon as ever he had perfected his design, and had suborned the sacristan of the place, he contrived, although the latter was a Dominican, by the favour of the Prior of Santa Croce, to get possession of the arm, together with the right hand of the corpse aforesaid. Upon this member not only might one see the skin intact, and likewise some of the fine hairs growing thereupon, but the nails thereof were so smooth and firm that they might well have been taken for those of a living man. And so as not to let there be any delay in despatching the business Sir Friar forthwith swathed the holy relic in divers wrappings fashioned out of fine taffeta, and placed it, together with certain sweetly-smelling gums, in a casket, and then got his affairs in order to depart thence.

When he arrived in Naples he there fell in with a certain trusty comrade of his, and one no less skilled in the arts of cozening than himself, a friar known by the name of Brother Mariano da Saona, and these two made an agreement to betake themselves together into Calabria, a province inhabited by a very gross and stupid race of peasants, and one exactly fitted to serve them for the trial of their tools. The following is the course they decided to adopt: Fra Mariano, having disguised himself with great care in the habit of a friar of the order of Saint Dominic, went down to the port, and there searched about to find a ship in which he might make the voyage into Calabria, and Fra Girolamo likewise, accompanied by other three of his comrades, repaired to the seafaring parts of the town, laden with wallets for travel, and there, having by chance come upon a bark belonging to Amantea,* the captain of which was minded to put to sea at once, they all of them took passage in the same; the one party of friars, meantime, showing themselves to be in no wise well affected

* Orig., *Mantioti*. Amantea is a small seaport of Calabria.

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towards the other, in the same fashion as one set of cheats, of the sort which haunts the country fairs, will bear itself towards another set, what time the two may foregather in some wayside inn. Then, when all things had been duly set in order, and when the sailors had dipped their oars into the water and stretched the sails to the breeze, they set forth on their voyage.

When they were come into the neighbourhood of Capri, on a sudden there rose up behind them a squall of wind so violent and so fraught with danger to them that all the sailors cried out forthwith that they could in no wise make head against the same. Wherefore, being almost shipwrecked, they came to a decision, albeit much against their inclination, to run the ship ashore on a little strip of beach near to Sorrento; and having with no little difficulty drawn the ship up to land at this spot, they all leaped on shore and took their way into the town, where they determined to tarry until the weather should have become more propitious for their voyage.

In this manner our good Fra Girolamo amongst the other travellers went with those who were of his company to the monastery of the Conventual Brothers, while Frate Mariano, who had become for the nonce a Dominican, took lodging for himself at the inn amongst the other laymen. When Fra Girolamo looked and saw how stormy the sea still was, and knew therefrom that some time must yet elapse before it could be calm, he made up his mind, worthy man, so as not to waste any more time, to show to the world then and there his first experiment with the virtues of that sham relic of his, bearing in mind more especially how he had in times past heard tell that this aforesaid city of Sorrento, over and above the fact that it was a place of great renown, was a very ancient city, more ancient, indeed, than any other in the kingdom. On this account, therefore, he came to the decision that the inhabitants thereof, being as yet infected with pristine dulness of intellect, would serve his purpose equally well as would the peasants of Calabria as subjects upon whom he might successfully try the experiment he had devised.

Wherefore he took care to let his good comrade, Fra Mariano, have privy information of what he was about to

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do, and then—the day following happening to be a Sunday—he begged the head of the convent to go to the archbishop, and to let him know that he, Fra Girolamo, had planned—with the sanction and blessing of the archbishop—to deliver a religious discourse on the following morning at the great church. And for this reason he begged the archbishop that he would cause intelligence of the same to be spread abroad, both within and without the city; forasmuch as he had determined in his mind that, as soon as he should behold assembled in the church a sufficient number of people, all showing themselves to be duly devout in their demeanour, he would, for the sake of the honour and glory of God, exhibit to their sight a certain holy relic, of a surety the most sacred they had ever beheld.

The archbishop, who was himself of the true Sorrentine type, straightway gave undoubting credit to Fra Girolamo's words, and at once sent forth his decree, not only into the city itself, but into all the country parts lying round about, that everyone should, for the reason aforesaid, betake himself to the place named in a reverent mind; in order that he might give ear to the preaching, and behold the sacred relic which was now to be shown to the people of Sorrento by a servant of God. In the end it came to pass that the news aforesaid was spread far and wide through all the country, so that on the appointed morning there was gathered together round the church such a vast multitude of people that within there was not space enough to contain the half thereof. When the hour was come for the preaching to begin, Fra Girolamo, accompanied by many other friars performing the ceremonies meet for such an occasion, went up into the pulpit and forthwith began to preach a long discourse concerning works of mercy and the holy duty of almsgiving. Then, when it seemed to him that the right moment had come, he, having first uncovered his head, began to speak in the following words:

"Most reverend monsignore, and all you other noble gentlemen and dames, and fathers and mothers of mine in Christ Jesus, I doubt not but that some report of my preaching in Naples will have come to your ears; for, in

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that place, by the help of God's mercy, and not through any merits or virtues of my own, I have, as often as I have preached, been listened to by an extraordinary number of people. Wherefore, having heard of the fair fame of this very noble city of yours, and of the humanity and piety dwelling in the hearts of its citizens—together with other accounts which have come to me concerning the beauty of your country—I have many times set my heart upon coming hither to lift up my voice and proclaim to you the word of God, and to take the while some joy and pleasure with you in this fair and gracious air of yours—an air which I, in good sooth, imagine is mightily well suited to my temperament. Seeing, however, that there has been issued to me a command from our Father the Vicar-general, that I should straightway betake myself into Calabria, there to assume the charge of various offices in certain of the towns to which I had been summoned, I found that it was necessary for me to turn upon my path somewhat, and to make my way towards that place whither I had already been commanded to go. Now, as I believe is well known to you, I myself, together with all the others who had embarked with me, arrived lately in your city, for the reason that the ship in which we took passage was driven into your gulf by the force of adverse winds and tempestuous seas, in spite of all the strivings and labours of the crew, all on board having narrowly escaped destruction.

"But I do not believe that this coming of mine into your city has been in any wise brought about by these contrary winds, but by the sacred working of the will of the Creator, who has thus graciously vouchsafed to satisfy in part my earnest wish. And in order, forsooth, that you also may be made participators in the aforesaid bounty, I am now minded to bring before your eyes a most marvellous relic, which thing cannot fail to serve for the increase of religion and piety amongst you. This relic is nothing else than the arm and the entire right hand of that most excellent and glorious writer of the words and deeds of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, Saint Luke the Evangelist, which precious thing the Patriarch of Constantinople gave to our Father Vicar. Whereupon this

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latter despatched me into Calabria therewith, for the reasons aforesaid, forasmuch as there has never been in this province up to the present time either the body or the limb of any saint whatever. On this account, my friends here gathered together, let each one of you in devout fashion uncover his head before looking at this precious treasure which our great God, more through the working of a miracle than through any act of mine, has granted you leave to behold. Now, first I will notify to you that I hold a bull from our lord the Pope, by the terms of which he grants the highest indulgence and complete remission of sins to every man who will give alms according to his ability in honour of the relic aforesaid, in order that, with whatever treasure can be thus gathered together, we may let construct a tabernacle of silver, set and adorned with precious stones, to serve as a fitting shrine for so excellent and precious a thing."

When the friar had made an end of this discourse, he drew forth from his sleeve a sealed bull, forged according to a cunning device of his own, and forthwith the whole of the people who were there present believed with unquestioning faith in the instrument he laid before them without ever having read a single letter of the same, and then each individual person drew near to make his offering, although it was no easy matter to do this on account of the crowd. Fra Girolamo, as soon as he had delivered in due course the fictitious story which he had concocted for the occasion, called to his associates and bade them bring to him the casket wherein had been placed the holy arm. Then, having let kindle a great quantity of lights round about, he went down on his knees, and, holding the sacred relic in his hand with a mighty show of reverence and with his eyes full of tears, he first of all kissed the border of the casket in which was shut up this false relic which he had prepared for the beguiling of others. Next he turned with great solemnity towards his companions, and then straightway began to sing a pious laud of Saint Luke, with full pontifical rites. At last, when he marked that all the people were standing, as it were, wonder-stricken, he opened the casket, and immediately there issued therefrom a most marvellous odour. Next

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he removed the wrappings of fine taffeta, and, having taken up the relic and uncovered the hand thereof and a small portion of the arm, he spake in this wise:

"This thing which I have here is the blessed and holy hand of that most faithful scribe of the Son of God; this is the blessed hand which not only wrote down so many excellent things concerning the glorious Virgin Mary, but likewise many times made a picture of her face and figure as she was in the flesh." And while he was thus earnestly set upon recounting the praises of the saint aforesaid, lo and behold! from a distant corner of the church, Fra Mariano da Saona, clad in the Dominican robes which he had lately put on, made all the people clear a way for him with the greatest persistence, and, shouting with a loud voice at Fra Girolamo, his confederate, began to declaim against him in the following wise: "Ah! vile rogue that thou art, coward and traitor both towards God and man, why art thou not overwhelmed with shame as thou utterest so monstrous a lie in affirming that this thing is in truth the arm of Saint Luke, forasmuch as I myself know for certain that at this moment his most holy body rests entire at Padua? In good sooth, this rotten bone you have here must have been dug up by you out of some grave, in order that you might deceive others therewith. Indeed, I am mightily astonished at the conduct of monsignore here and of these other reverend fathers in the church, men who might with reason condemn thee to be stoned, a punishment surely meet for thy offences."

The archbishop and all the people there assembled were not a little amazed when they listened to this strange saying, and, reproaching Fra Mariano with sharp words on account of his utterance, they commanded him to hold his peace forthwith; but he, in spite of this rebuke, ceased not to bellow forth his exclamations; nay, rather he showed himself all the more clamorous and persistent in persuading the crowd assembled that they should lend no belief to aught that Fra Girolamo might tell them. And now the affair had been brought into this tangle, it seemed to Fra Girolamo that the time had fully come when he should set himself to work the false miracle he had so carefully prepared. Wherefore, feigning to be somewhat

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disturbed in mind, he made a gesture with his hand to the people, signifying thereby that they should keep silence, forasmuch as they still continued to murmur; and when, after a short time had elapsed, he marked that everyone present was anxiously bent on hearing whatever he might have to say, he turned towards the high altar, where there stood an image of the Crucified, and, kneeling down before the same, he took up his speech, weeping plentifully the while:

"Jesus Christ my Lord, Redeemer of the human race, God as well as man, Thou who hast moulded me in Thine own image, and hast led me here through the merits of Thy most glorious body and by Thy human flesh without spot or blemish, and hast ransomed me by Thy most bitter passion, I now implore by the merits of those marvellous wounds which at one time Thou gavest to our seraphic Saint Francis, that it may be Thy pleasure to show forth a miracle about which there can be no gainsaying, here in the presence of this most devout concourse of people and of this valiant friar, who in sooth, acting the part of an enemy and of an antagonist to our religion, has come hither to put a slight upon my truthfulness. Deal with us in such a manner that, if I now say what is false, Thou shalt hurl all Thy wrath upon me straightway, and slay me at this very moment. But if, on the contrary, I speak nought but the truth in declaring that this is indeed the arm of Saint Luke, the most worthy recorder of Thy life and doings, then, O Lord! not for the sake of vengeance, but that the truth may be clearly made manifest, send down Thy judgment upon him in such a manner that, however much he may wish to do it, he shall be able, neither by word of mouth nor by gesture, to acknowledge his fault."

Scarcely had Fra Girolamo come to the end of this exorcism of his, when, all on a sudden, Fra Mariano—according to the plan already settled between the two—began to writhe all over, and to twist his hands and his feet, to howl aloud and to babble with his tongue in such wise that not a single comprehensible word issued from his lips. His eyes rolled from side to side, and his mouth was all awry; and, giving himself the semblance of being drawn together

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in all his limbs, he let himself fall backwards as one who had lost all control. As soon as the people who were there in the church perceived that a manifest and undoubted miracle had been wrought, they forthwith began to cry one and all for mercy in such wise that had it thundered aloud the sound thereof would scarcely have been heard by reason of the shouting.

Fra Girolamo, perceiving that the people had been enticed into the mood he desired, now began to cry out at the top of his voice, in order to inflame them yet further and to complete the trick he had set out, "Praised be God! Silence, O my people!" And when he had calmed the excitement of the congregation by these words, and had made certain of them take up Fra Mariano, who now seemed to be as one dead, and lay him down in front of the altar, he began to speak in this wise: "Oh! all ye of high estate, both ladies and gentlemen—all ye peasants likewise—I beseech you, by the virtue of the blessed passion of Christ, that you will all kneel down, and will devoutly recite a paternoster in honour of Saint Luke, by the merits of whom may God not only bring this poor man back to life, but may He likewise restore to him the lost use of his limbs, and his speech as well, in order that his soul may be spared the descent into eternal perdition."

No sooner had the friar uttered this command, than they all straightway fell into the posture of prayer, and, on the other part, Fra Girolamo, having come down from the pulpit and taken out a little knife, pared off a small shred of the nail from the miraculous hand, which thing he put in a beaker of holy water, and then, having opened wide the mouth of Fra Mariano, he poured down his throat the precious liquor, saying the while: "By the virtue of the Holy Spirit, I command you that you rise up forthwith and return to your former state of health." Now, Fra Mariano, who up to this present moment had only with great difficulty kept himself from laughing aloud, swallowed the beverage which was offered to him, and, perceiving the full drift of the affair, he suddenly raised himself upright on his feet, and opened his eyes like a man who had been stunned by a blow, and began to cry aloud, "Jesus! Jesus!" The assembled multitude, as soon as they per-

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ceived this fresh and undoubted miracle, likewise began to shout, one and all of them, "Jesus! Jesus!" like those who are terror-stricken and stupified with amazement. Some of them ran to ring the bells, and some to kiss and to touch the vestments of the preacher, bearing themselves in such a manner that it seemed as if each one of them was driven by some religious frenzy to believe that the last and universal judgment of all men was indeed at hand.

Fra Girolamo, who was now minded to make a quick despatch of the business which had brought him hither managed with no small difficulty to make his way once more up into the pulpit, whereupon he gave command that they should at once place the holy relic in front of the altar and, when this had been done, he made all his companions range themselves in order round about it, some holding lighted tapers in their hands, and some busying themselves to clear a space by the altar in such wise that every single person might be able, without hindrance, to offer prayers or oblations, according as he would, to the holy arm. And even after there had been collected from the crowd—the greatest that had ever been seen gathered together in that place—a vast sum of money, it chanced that certain women in the congregation were seized with an unbridled access of charitable frenzy, so violent that they tore off from their persons the pearls and the silver and the other precious jewels which they were wearing, and made an offering of the same to the holy evangelist.

And when they had in this manner kept the holy relic exposed to view for the whole of that day, it seemed at length to Fra Girolamo that the time had come for him to make the best of his way back to his home with the booty he had already gathered together. Wherefore, having made a signal to his companions in very cautious wise, they dexterously packed up everything belonging to them, together with the arm enclosed in the coffer. Then all the people assembled in the church took their way towards the convent. Fra Girolamo, who by this time was esteemed and reverenced almost as a saint by the archbishop and all the people, was by them honourably escorted back to this place, and, having had these notable miracles of his publicly authenticated, he himself, with Fra

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Mariano and his other companions, and the great store of booty they had collected, went on board their ship the following morning, the weather being fine and propitious for their voyage.

Thus, sailing before a favourable wind, in a few days they came to Calabria, where they at once set to work with all kinds of fraudulent tricks, with so great success that, having filled their pockets full of money, and traversed all the regions of Italy, both those inland and those lying on the sea-board, they gathered together very great wealth by the virtue of the miraculous arm and by their many tricks of knavery, and at last returned to Spoleto. Having come there it seemed to them that they stood on safe ground; so Fra Girolamo, through the agency of a certain lord cardinal, bought for himself a bishopric—not by simony, indeed, but by a new form of collusion invented, and called by them "procuration,"* Then he, together with his colleague, Fra Mariano, passed a life of idleness, and indulged themselves in every pleasure as long as they lived.

MASUCCIO

THE last novel has in a measure shown us with what great cunning these fraudulent and most rapacious wolves strive and scheme to get possession of our goods, working for the most part in such fashion that no human precaution is of any value to defend us from their craft. And the practice of theirs which assuredly tends most strongly to kindle our anger and contempt is their continual preaching in condemnation of

* Masuccio probably means the delegation of ecclesiastical duties by the holders of benefices to others who agreed to discharge these duties for a small portion of the revenues. These were nearly always Mendicant Friars, and having got possession of the benefices, they were confirmed in the same, notably by Sixtus IV., who had himself been a Franciscan, by the bull of August 31st, 1474: *Amplissimæ gratiae et privilegia fratrum minorum conventualium or dinis S. Francisci, quæ propterea Mare Magnum nuncupantur.* On this account the real control of Church affairs fell almost entirely into their hands.

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avarice, which thing they regard not only as a deadly sin, but also as an offence as unpardonable as heresy itself. But, we on the other hand, may see that avarice is not merely to be looked at as the universal and inborn passion of those who have put on the religious habit, forasmuch as we may behold them one and all following her closely, and embracing her even, as if she were some beloved friend or sister, or as if such doings had been expressly decreed and ordained as a precept of obedience by their rules.

Thus, if I made the statement towards the end of the foregoing novel that our Fra Girolamo bought a bishopric for himself, and that in these days simony has changed its name, no one need be at all astonished at this saying of mine, seeing that it must be plain to the intelligence of anyone that no man, however eminent his virtues may be, or however much of time and money he may have spent in studying in the Roman courts, can ever hope to rise to any grade whatever in the prelature save through the help and favour of the master of the mint. Nay, indeed, a man will find that he must needs purchase his prelature even as if he were purchasing by auction a horse at a fair, and he will find likewise that, over and above the bribes in the shape of gifts and stipulated sums of money handed over to those who favour his cause, he will also be obliged to pay liberally certain others to secure against molestation by them. Wherefore we should not wonder when we find men speaking of this thing, which is in sooth unlawful possession, as a due and deserved income. From this fact, therefore, we can set forth the argument that friars and priests and monks have invented a new language full of strange idioms, forasmuch as now, in speaking of the most heinous crimes, they add to, and trick out, the names of these with some well-known words out of the Holy Scriptures. And thus eating and drinking at the cost of the crucifix, and living a life of idleness at our charges, they make a mock both of God and man.*

* In Masuccio's time the Mendicant Orders had the privilege of performing all the sacraments, and likewise the very lucrative one of allowing sepulture in their habit, thus giving direct transit

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Since these men are wont to describe as "the secret of their rule" the most abominable sins which can be wrought on earth to the dishonour of God and of nature, and practise these same offences without sparing or fear or shame, each one may easily figure to himself how they will act with regard to other crimes which are less revolting. I, who am minded to give farther intelligence concerning their doings public and private, am led on by the desire to let continue these novels in the same strain which I have already taken up. Therefore I will bring forward some other well-approved testimony against the monks, and in the novel which follows—the fifth—I will let you know how a ribald priest, besides singing the "Gaudeamus," and the "Per incarnati Verbi misterium," and the "Veni Sponsa Christi," and working other iniquities, was wont to call the sword which he carried about with him "Salvum me fac"; and likewise how, having transferred this name to another weapon, he cried out that he was bent on seating the Pope in Rome, and in driving out the Turk from Constantinople.

to Paradise. The Popes—Sixtus IV. especially—sided with them in their disputes with the parish priests, and under this patronage they became very aggressive and unscrupulous in their dealings with their opponents. In a report made by Giovanni Francesco Carafa, afterwards Paul IV., to Clement VII., there is a passage illustrating their methods: *Si viene ad homicidi non solo col veneno, ma apertamente col coltello e con la spada, per non dire con schiopetti.*

THE END OF THE FOURTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Fifth

ARGUMENT

MASSIMILLA, BEING AMOROUSLY LOOKED UPON BY A PRIEST, AND BY A TAILOR AS WELL, PROMISES HER FAVOURS BOTH TO THE ONE AND THE OTHER. WHILE SHE IS TAKING HER PLEASURE IN HER HOUSE WITH THE TAILOR, THE PRIEST COMES FOR WHAT HAS BEEN PROMISED HIM, AND TRIES TO GAIN ENTRY BY FORCE. WHEREUPON THE TAILOR, BEING MIGHTILY ALARMED, SEEKS SHELTER IN THE GARRET. THE PRIEST COMES IN AND SAYS THAT HE HAS A WISH TO SEND THE POPE TO ROME. THE TAILOR, SEEING THAT A FESTIVAL IS AT HAND, DEEMS THAT IT OUGHT NOT TO BE UNGRACED BY MUSIC, SO HE BLOWS A NOTE ON THE PIPES, WHICH PUTS TO FLIGHT THE PRIEST. THEN THE TAILOR TAKES POSSESSION OF THE BOOTY LEFT BEHIND.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MESSER ANGELO CARACCIOLO *

EXORDIUM

AMONGST people of the common sort there is a saying, times and often to be heard in the course of conversation, that one may find other ways of paying debts than with money; and if anyone has ever held this proverb in esteem, or has had cause to make use thereof, I, assuredly, shall be the one now to have recourse to it in my dealings with you. And as it happens that, from the beginning of our friendship to this present time, I find myself under so many and divers obligations to you that not only am I altogether unable to

* Besides this Novel Masuccio dedicates two others—No. VII. and No. XX.—to various members of this noble family, and likewise makes one of them a character in Novel XLIV.

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enumerate them, but am unable even to call all of them to mind. And because to people of magnificent estate like yourself, things of small value, offered by those to whom you are bound by ties of true friendship, are wont to be more acceptable than sumptuous gifts, I have resolved to acquit myself of a small portion of the debt which I owe you by offering for your acceptance the novel which follows. I beg you, therefore, to receive it with all affection; and, if the uncouth idiom of my mother tongue* should be entirely, or even in part, displeasing to you, I beg you to pluck only the fruit of my uncultivated and unskilled handiwork, and leave the blossom thereof alone. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

IN the most authentic records, and those most worthy of being kept in remembrance, we may read concerning the high estate and the wealth which in times past existed in that delightful region lying on the sea-coast by Amalfi; and although, in dealing with these bygone days, we may speak in this, or even in a more boastful strain, nevertheless, when we look upon its present condition, we must see that not only is the wealth gotten through mercantile enterprise greatly diminished, and the sumptuous palaces fallen to ruin, but that the inhabitants thereof can to-day only get them a sustenance with great difficulty. Therefore, coming back to our story, I will tell you that not far from the city, (the name of which so delightful is the site thereof) in a certain sense describes it, there was situated a village in which, not a great time ago, lived a priest, Don Battimo by name, a man who, albeit he was country bred, was in no wise lacking in skill and understanding. He was young, and very robust in body, and on the whole was more given to the

* *Materno.* This is a favourite word with Masuccio, especially as applied to the language in which he wrote. In the Exordium of the First Novel it occurs, and in the *edizione della Gatta* was changed into *volgare*. He likewise calls himself *materno poeta* in the heading to the Proem.

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service of the ladies round about that to the celebration of the holy office and the prescribed services of the hours. Wherefore, through the frequent following of sport of this kind, he brought it to pass that divers poor wights of the neighbourhood found their brows decked with ram's-horn crowns.

At last it came to pass that one day he let his eyes fall upon a certain young woman, a neighbour of his, whose name was Massimilla, the wife of a poor carpenter; but she, although on account of her great beauty she was wont to pique herself not a little whenever she might ensnare the fancy of a lover, when she became aware that the priest was in no small degree taken with her, never deigned to bestow upon him any greater favour than a single pleasant glance; perhaps because she had let her thoughts stray in another direction. The priest, a man by nature both eager and fickle, as soon as he realized that he pleased the young woman but little by making eyes at her, and that his prayers and flattering speeches had no effect upon her, began to follow her up with the greatest importunity with cries, and even with threatening words, in such a manner that she, more through weariness and fear for herself than through any longing she felt for him, at last gave him her promise that one day, when her husband might happen to be out of the way, he might have his will of her.

On this account the priest rested content to let affairs go on as she had promised; and while he, in good faith, kept back awhile his ardour, it happened that a young man belonging to another village near by, a tailor, Marco by name, fell in like manner very hotly in love with Massimilla. Now this young man, being gifted with very moderate skill at his craft, spent the greater part of his time in frequenting the feasts round about, and making very pleasing music upon a bagpipe which belonged to him, and, seeing that he was both in face and person a very seemly fellow—and, besides this, always furnished with a store of fresh quips—he was readily welcomed wherever he might go. Wherefore he found far greater reason for following business of this sort than for exercising his original trade. And because, as I have already said, he

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was enamoured beyond all bounds with the aforesaid young woman, spending his time in ogling her after the most courtly and gentle fashion he knew how to use, in order to cause her to regard him in the same wise, and because he was so mightily persistent in his amorous pursuit, it came to pass that one day he got from Massimilla a promise like to the one she had given with so much distaste to the importunate priest. On this account Maestro Marco was almost beside himself with delight, and looked forward to the departure of the luckless husband with no little pleasure and longing, a thing which both the priest and the wife herself awaited with just as great anxiety. As their good luck, which forsooth was bad luck for the poor husband, would have it, not many days passed before he had occasion to go as a sailor on board a caravel which was bound on a voyage to Palermo.

A very short time after his departure there happened to be held a festival in a certain place which lay quite near to his home, and Maestro Marco, having been bidden to the same to make music with his pipes, was delighted beyond all measure when he found there Massimilla, who had gone thither with some other peasants. Wherefore, having given each other many loving glances during the day, when the hour came for the ending of the revels Maestro Marco made his way to the young woman's side very cautiously, and with as few words as he could make serve his purpose, begged her that, of her kindness, she would keep the promise she had made to him some time agone. The young woman, to whom the mere promise had seemed an affair light enough, now in discreet and wary fashion prepared to fulfil the same, a matter which likewise offered little difficulty; so, after exchanging all sorts of soft speeches in the manner of rustic lovers, she said to the young man: "In a very short time from now I shall go my way hence, and shall pass along the road which cuts across from here. Therefore, do you keep good watch, and, as soon as I shall have gone away, follow me at once, so that we may contrive to come into some safe and well-chosen spot such as our business demands."

Now there belonged to Massimilla a little house with a garden attached thereto, situated upon the side of the

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mountain above the hamlet, in which place her husband plied his calling instead of in a shop, working there at timber for ship-building. Now and then, indeed, in the time of summer, he would go with all his household and abide there altogether, and to this place the young woman deemed she might go with safety and take her pleasure with Maestro Marco, not only for the portion of the day which had yet to run, but likewise for a good part of the following night. Maestro Marco, highly delighted with this march of affairs, turned to a little boy of his who was with him, and, having given him the bag belonging to his pipes, bade him carry the same back to his house, while he stowed away the mouthpiece in his girdle. Then, when he had marked that Massimilla had left the festival, he followed quickly upon her track, as soon as he thought that he had given her time enough. And, having each traversed the country intervening in about the same time, they met once more at the cottage which had already been designated as the place of their foregathering, and, having entered therein and made fast the door, they duly settled themselves to the pleasant task they had in hand.

The priest, knowing nothing whatever of all this, and harbouring not the least suspicion of such a man as Marco, was only aware that the husband of Massimilla had taken ship to Palermo, and that she herself had been at the merry-making. Wherefore he, deeming that she would by this time have returned home, and foreseeing that he would find her at her wonted dwelling-place in the village, made up his mind to put his fortune to the touch; so, having set himself upon the road, accoutred with a huge cutlass which he styled his "Salvum me fac," he took his way with leisurely steps, as though he was walking for his pleasure, towards the dwelling of Massimilla. This he found to be fast shut from the outside; whereupon he at once settled in his mind that she would surely be in the place where she really was, forasmuch as she was accustomed often to go thither. He knew the spot well enough, and the sort of path which led thereto, and, although this seemed to him somewhat hard to tread on account of the fierce heat, he turned his steps towards the hillside, and, urged on by love, at last arrived at the cottage aforesaid,

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puffing and blowing not a little from shortness of breath.

Thus, at the very same moment when Maestro Marco was just beginning to kiss and fondle his lass, the priest, believing that she was within and alone, knocked at the door with no little delight in his heart. The young woman giving over her kissing for the nonce, cried out, "Who is without there?" And to this the priest made answer: "It is I—your own Don Battimo." "In sooth that might be good hearing at any other time," replied the young woman. Thereupon the priest answered: "And do you mean to say you know not what my will is, at such a time as this when, forsooth, there is neither your husband nor anyone else to stand in the way? Open to me, I pray you." Hearing these words she cried, "Ah! go away, and God go with you, my good man, for the reason that I am, at present, in no way ready to do what you propose." The priest, mightily upset at this answer, cried out, without taking further heed of his words: "By God's faith, if you do not open to me forthwith, I will beat your door down to the ground, and will then have my will of you, whether you like it or not; and afterwards I will go and proclaim your disgrace through all the country."

Massimilla, understanding clearly from the nature of the words spoken by the priest that he must surely be in one of his headstrong moods, and that he would as soon carry out his threat as utter it, turned to Maestro Marco, who was shaking with fear in every limb just like herself, through knowing what a reckless, giddy-pated fellow the priest was, and thus addressed him: "Dear heart of mine, you must understand clearly enough how great is the peril in which we both of us are placed on account of this unchained devil and accursed of God. Therefore I beg you, for the safeguarding of us both, to get yourself quickly up that little ladder into the pigeon loft. Then, when you shall have have mounted to the upper floor, and drawn up the ladder after you, you must stay there for a little time, being careful the while to make no sound of any sort. Meantime I hope that by one method or another I may get him to quit this place—and may bad luck go with him!—without suspecting aught as to how we have

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been occupying ourselves, and without taking away with him anything that is ours."

Now Maestro Marco, who, as far as courage was concerned, was much more like a sheep than a lion, straightway agreed to carry out exactly the hasty advice of the young woman, and at once set himself to follow all the directions she had given him, and as soon as he had gained the loft he put his eye to a crack that there was in the floor, and waited with no slight pangs to see what indeed might be the issue of the jest. Meantime the priest still kept on clamouring that the door should be opened to him; and as soon as the young woman saw that her lover was safely stowed away, she ran with a smiling face to undo the door, and, putting her hand upon him with a merry laugh, she let him see clearly that she had a mind to talk with him. The priest was inflamed with desire to possess her as fierce as that of the starving wolf for the timid kid, and without either good manners or restraint he began not only to cover her with kisses—as forsooth Maestro Marco had done a minute ago—but even to bite her in his amorous rage, neighing aloud as if he had been some fierce war horse. Feeling himself now fully ready for the fray, he declared that, come what might, he was determined to send the Pope to Rome. Hereupon Massimilla, who knew well enough that she was all the while observed by Maestro Marco, cried out, "What Pope may this be, and what merry words are these which you speak?" And though she put on an angry look, she made but a weak defence of herself. The priest, who every moment became more and more inflamed with desire, cut short his words and straightway determined to proceed to deeds; so, having dexterously turned her over upon a little couch and got himself valiantly in order for the first course, he placed his hand upon his sword and cried out, "Now the Pope is going into Rome." And this time, in sooth, His Holiness wore the pallium meet for such festivals, and presented himself more than once before the very altar and the tribune of Saint Peter. Maestro Marco, whose vexation had by this time in some degree driven away his fear, was, as it has already been noted, a very witty fellow; wherefore, finding himself now in perfect safety from any

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assault, and seeing what manner of game it was that was going on, albeit it was to him a very hateful spectacle, he took counsel with himself how he might play some new jest; so, having taken out from his girdle the pipe he carried there, he said to himself, "By my faith, this is not the sort of festival they hold when the Pope makes his entry into Rome—not a note of music of any sort do I hear." And then forthwith he put the pipe to his mouth and began to blow thereon a most wonderful entrance march, making all the while a huge clamour and stamping on the floor, which was made of planks. The priest, who had not yet come to the end of his sporting, as soon as he heard the music and the loud confused clatter which was going on over his head, was at once seized with the fear that the kinsfolk of the young woman and of her husband must be at hand, *cum gladiis et fustibus*, with the view of putting injury and shame upon him; so, mightily dismayed and using greater speed than he had ever yet put forth, he gave over the game which he had begun without being able to finish. Calling to mind the whereabouts of the door and finding the same open, he gave play to his legs the swiftest he knew how to employ, and made his way home without once stopping or turning his head to look behind him. Maestro Marco, as soon as he was assured that this fresh scheme of his had come to a happier issue than he had ever deemed it could attain, made his descent with a gladness of heart much greater than had been the fear with which he had gone up, and found the young woman almost choking with excessive laughter, so much so that she had not yet risen from the couch. Wherefore he at once resumed possession of the booty which awhile ago he had lost; and as the Pope had been duly honoured with music when he had made his entry into Rome, so Maestro Marco now brought the Turk into Constantinople with a mighty pleasant spell of dancing.

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MASUCCIO

MAKING a quip of my own, I will say that there are grounds for the belief that Massimilla got far more pleasure from the retreat of the Turk out of Constantinople than from all the pomp of the Pope's entry into Rome. But for the reason that she by herself cannot give judgment I will leave it to be reckoned out in considering a similar spectacle of two nuns in a story which I intend to set before you at once—these ladies, having given reception both to clerics and to laymen without taking any trouble about the music, made it abundantly clear how, *in causa scientiæ*, they knew readily how to play their part in saving themselves.

THE END OF THE FIFTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Sixth

ARGUMENT

ON A CERTAIN NIGHT TWO NUNS TAKE THEIR PLEASURE WITH A PRIOR AND WITH A PRIEST. THIS THING COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BISHOP, HE SETS HIMSELF ON THE WATCH AND SEIZES THE PRIOR AT THE GATE OF THE MONASTERY. THE PRIEST REMAINS WITHIN, AND THE NUN WHO IS WITH HIM IS MADE AWARE THAT THE BISHOP IS DEMANDING ENTRY. SHE, BY MEANS OF A TRICK, INDUCES THE ABBESS TO GET OUT OF HER BED, AND THEN CONCEALS THE PRIEST THEREIN. THE BISHOP DISCOVERS HIM: THE NUN REMAINS FREE OF ALL BLAME; THE ABBESS IS DISGRACED, AND TOGETHER WITH THE PRIEST CONDEMNED TO PAY A FINE OF MONEY.

TO THE MOST SERENE ROBERTO DI SANSEVERINO, PRINCE OF SALERNO AND ADMIRAL OF THE KINGDOM*

EXORDIUM

IN no one of my novels, most serene prince, have I as yet discoursed, either in great measure or small, concerning the amazing cunning and the subtle devices which are so often brought into play by a good number of the women under religious vows, when sudden emergency may make a call therefor. On this account it seems to me that it would serve a useful or even necessary purpose to give you some news concerning their manners and customs, seeing that I desire greatly to dedicate to you

* Roberto di Sanseverino was Masuccio's great friend and patron. San Severino, the town from which the family takes its name, is situated between Salerno and Avellino, and in the principal church there are tombs commemorating certain notable bearers of the name—Tommasso di San Severino, high constable

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some fresh essay in story-telling from my pen; in order that, if you should at any past time have heard tell of divers good works wrought by such as these, you may now be confirmed in your belief as to their virtues by the account I shall give you of certain performances of theirs wrought in this present day, and furthermore that you may be brought to see clearly how these women, by means of the tricks they learn in the monasteries, manage to overcome the defects of nature in spite of the weakness of their sex, and occasionally by their cleverness confound the counsels of very prudent men. The following tale will bear full testimony to the truth of what I have said. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

IN that noble and ancient city, your own Marsico,* as perchance may be well known to you already, there is a most famous convent of ladies of the very highest worth and repute, in which, during the year which has just passed, there were no more than ten nuns, all of them in the flower of their youth and adorned with great beauty of per-

of the kingdom in 1553, and several of the princes of Salerno. This Roberto was the son of Giovanni, who bore the title of Count of Marsico. The last-named died early, leaving his young children to be brought up by his wife, who seems to have educated them in all the arts necessary to enable young noblemen to play their parts in those turbulent times. Roberto had come to man's estate in 1459, when the war broke out between Ferdinand I. and the Angevin faction, headed by the Prince of Taranto and the Duca di Sessa. He at once entered the service of the king, and distinguished himself so greatly in the successive campaigns, that when peace was restored after the defeat of the Angevin forces at Troia in 1462, Ferdinand created him Prince of Salerno, dispossessing Felice Orsini, who had joined the rebels. Masuccio was secretary to this prince, and seems to have been profoundly attached to him, judging from the terms he uses in alluding to his death in the "Parlamento" at the end of "Il Novellino," Prince Roberto died in 1474.

* A town in Calabria and a noted haunt of brigands. Sanseverino was Count of Marsico when the lordship of Salerno was conferred upon him.

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son, and at their head an abbess, an old lady of very good and holy life. Now the abbess, though assuredly she had not let pass in vain her own days of youthful bloom, nevertheless was wont without ceasing to exhort the company of nuns under her care that they ought not, in the flight of time, to spend and to waste the early stage of their life, affirming, with numberless arguments, that there was no grief so sharp as that which arises from the consciousness of time spent in vain, and from making such discovery only when there is available little or no space left for repentance or amendment. And although, considering the excellent disposition of her charges in general, there was no cause for her to weary herself greatly over a matter of this sort, still amongst the other nuns there were two of high family and gifted with marvellous shrewdness of wit, one of whom—although she was never baptized by the name of Chiara—I will nevertheless, by a change of style, call Chiara. And hereby I shall only be giving her her desert, seeing that she knew very well, whenever occasion might demand, to make clear any business she might have in hand like a wise and discreet damsel. The other I will christen on my own account, and will call her Agnesa. These two nuns, either because they may have been fairer to look upon than any of the others, or perhaps because they were more observant of the precepts and ordinances of their superior, as soon as they perceived that the bishop of the city had, in a very severe and special letter, forbidden the intercourse of their own monastery with any person of whatever sort, made up their minds that they would in no wise submit to any such command, but on the contrary they would, with increased care and scheming, call up all their wits to the task of satisfying their wanton desires, and to employ various and strange expedients therefor.

On this account, letting such thoughts as these rule them, the natural effect followed in due course, so that in a short space of time certain plots of ground, having been well cultivated the while, brought forth abundant fruit in the shape of divers little monks. Thus there was established between these two an indissoluble friendship and perpetual alliance, and so carelessly did they set about

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wielding the razor, that they seemed rather to be flaying than shaving.* Seeing that they took small care to keep these doings of theirs hidden and secret, but let them come to the knowledge of divers people, the whole matter was made known to Messere the bishop, as to many others. Now it chanced one day that he betook himself to this reverend and holy house, peradventure in order to confirm and strengthen the dwellers therein in well-doing, and, as fate would have it, he too found himself hotly inflamed by the charm and the beauty of Sister Chiara; and, after having laid upon them many commands of his, and certain new provisions, he went back to his house a man differing vastly from what he was when he had set forth. As soon as he was come there he began to indite billets and to compose sonnets to let his Chiara know, in a few words, how he was altogether consuming away on account of the love he had for her. Chiara, when she had for several days held him in her lures in order to make his passion burn yet more fiercely, and when she had perceived that he had a countenance like the work of an unskilful artist, decineated peradventure after the similitude of one of the earliest of Adam's stock,† she made up her mind, once for all, to place his name in her tablets as one to be held in ridicule. Over and above these imperfections, he was miserly beyond all measure—a quality which did not at all commend itself to the grasping claws of Madonna Chiara.

The bishop having been made aware of this fact, and likewise that he had been gulled by his ladylove; and furthermore that, though she was as bright as a diamond to all the rest of the world, she was as thick as mud to him,‡ took it into his head to learn who might be the gallant upon whom this lady had directed her thoughts; and seeing that he was himself a lover to whom very few roads of this sort were strange ground, he very astutely made an inquiry into the matter, and discovered that the reverend Prior of San Jacobo was wont to take his pleasure with Sister Agnesa, while Chiara would hold high festival

* Orig., *che piuttosto scorticare che radere saria stato giudicato.*

† Orig., *da li primi di Adam.*

‡ Orig., *e che questa ear Chiara per altria ma torbida per lui*—a pun upon the lady's name.

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with another priest called Don Tanni Salustio, a man of much wealth. Moreover, he ascertained that, for the sake of companionship, these two were accustomed to betake themselves together almost every night to the monastery to find pleasure and contentment with their paramours. Wherefore, having gotten particular knowledge of the affair, the bishop made up his mind that he would set to work with all possible means to get these two artificers into his hands, not only so that he might famously well pluck out of them the luxuriant plumes which they carried, but also that he might take vengeance for the insult which had been wrought to himself, a man who had proved to be more fortunate and adept in gaining his bishopric than in winning a way into the good graces of Madonna Chiara. And thus, while he made it his practice to go every night in person, taking with him a troop of ravenous clerical wolves, to the neighbourhood of the monastery to carry out as best he could his twofold plan, it happened that on a certain night, when the prior was taking his departure, he stumbled onto the lair of his enemies, and was by them taken in hold. Then, being brought before Caiaphas the high-priest, trembling the while with something else than cold, although he had not yet been questioned as to aught, the thought came into his mind that, by making a charge against his comrade, he might ward off from himself the anger of the bishop. Wherefore he straightway declared he had come thither to do naught that was blameworthy, but had simply gone into the monastery with Don Tanni Salustio, whom he had just left with Chiara in her cell.

The bishop, who was not a little gratified in that he had got his hand upon the prior, was at the same time no less eager to capture his companion as well; so, having bound the prior securely and sent him back to his house, he placed in order his artillery, so that he might be able to win an entrance undisturbed into the monastery, and next considered how he might, without risk, lay a firm grip upon Salustio, should such a thing be found possible.

Now Agnesa, who had been in a watchful and suspicious mood since the prior had left her, at once heard sounds outside which told her of his capture, and although she

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grieved for him from the bottom of her heart, nevertheless, as soon as she became aware how the bishop was seeking to gain admission to the monastery, she ran with all speed to the cell of Chiara and made known to her in as few words as possible what business was afoot. Chiara, albeit she heard the aforesaid news with the utmost disgust and confusion, being fully aware of how great evil might ensue thereanent, nevertheless, in no way lost heart over the business, but like a shrewd and courageous woman, and reinforced by a sudden counsel of resource, determined upon a way by which she might free herself from the quagmire so full of peril which lay manifest before her. So, having made stand up on his feet the priest, who as luck would have it had already discharged his crossbow more than once, and had made several fine marks on the target, and given him directions to hold himself in full readiness, she betook herself at the top of her speed to the chamber of the abbess, and calling upon her with a voice trembling with fear, she cried, "Madonna, run, run, for a snake or some other hurtful beast has broken in amongst your young chickens, and is eating them all." The abbess, being alike old, and one vowed to religion, and a woman, was monstrously avaricious, and, although it irked the old lady greatly to be thus disturbed, nevertheless, in order to defend her own possessions, she quickly threw herself out of bed, and betook herself with the gait of a wolf towards the farmyard where her fowls were kept.

Chiara, who was meantime standing keenly on the watch, when she perceived that her scheme had come to the issue she desired, without farther delay haled the priest forth from her cell, and, having taken him by the tail of his shirt—his clothes all bundled round his neck—she led him with nimble steps to the chamber of the abbess just as if he had been a beast going to the shambles. Then, when she had made him get into the abbess's own bed, she hurried swift as the wind back to her chamber.

Now almost at this very moment the bishop with his band of followers gained an entrance to the monastery, and, having gone into the dormitory, he came by chance across the abbess, who with a stick in her hand was coming back from the farmyard victorious, though she had

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found there no serpent. As soon as she saw the bishop with so disturbed a visage, she said to him, glancing towards him in turn the while, "Messere, what strange doings are these, that I find you here at such an hour?" The bishop, who by the savagery of his hideous face might well have struck terror into a bear, thereupon turned to the abbess, and related to her point by point everything that had occurred, saying in conclusion that he was firmly fixed in the determination to lay hands on Salustio, and on Chiara as well, by one means or another. The abbess, mortally grieved that an accident like this should have happened, and proclaiming her own innocence in the business as well as she was able, made answer that she was ready to satisfy his wishes in every way, and at the same time very well contented with all he had asked. The bishop, who was very much disturbed in mind at being thus forced to lose more time, forthwith led the way, with the abbess and his band of assistants following, to the cell of Chiara, and, having come there, they knocked at the door and called out to her that she should open to them forthwith.

Now Chiara in sooth had not slept at all that night; nevertheless, making believe to have risen from her couch all heavy with sleep, without arraying herself completely in her habit, and rubbing her eyes, she came to the door of her cell, and displayed herself in no wise troubled by what had happened, and said, smiling somewhat the while, "What is the meaning of all this array?" The bishop, now more fiercely inflamed than ever with love of her, and finding her more beautiful than ever when viewed under so searching a light, nevertheless, by way of giving her a strong shock of terror, cried out: "Ah! worthless wench that you are, we are come here to deal out to you the punishment meet for those guilty of sacrilege, and you begin to give us your japes and your jokes, just as if we did not know that Salustio has been lying with you this very night, and is, indeed, now inside there." The abbess, who was a prudent dame, was incited by the ill turn which seemed to have come to Chiara's fortunes; wherefore, before the latter could say a word in reply, she assaulted her with a torrent of injurious words,

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showing plainly that in her fury she was quite ready to lay hands on her. Chiara, knowing all the while that she had already settled her own bear in the other's lair, answered the abbess in the following terms, speaking somewhat disdainfully, "Madama, you have come running here in too great a rage against me, and have sought to throw stain upon my good name in a fashion contrary to all honour and duty; but I place my hopes in God and in the glorious apostle Saint Thomas, to whose service we are vowed, and entreat them so to bring it about that Messere shall not go forth from this place until he shall have gained clear and open knowledge of my innocence, and of another's guilt. Indeed, he who delivered Susanna from the false accusation of those villainous elders, will likewise deliver me from this infamy which is now cast upon me." And having thus spoken, with feigned tears and much show of anger, she went on to say, "Ravening wolves as you are, come into my cell according to your habit." The bishop, who was fully satisfied in his mind that the priest was indeed within, by a quick movement entered the room with all his followers, and searched every part thereof so narrowly that they left unvisited no corner in which even a hare could have hidden itself, but by no amount of searching could they find him whom they wanted to find. Wherefore the bishop, having left the cell full of wrath and anger, cried out: "In good faith, we will leave no spot unsearched till we find him." The abbess, so as they might make inquisition of the cells of all the nuns, cried out: "Sirs, in God's name search every place, and make a beginning in my own chamber." And in the same strain spake all the other nuns, who had run together to the spot on hearing the uproar which was being made.

Since the bishop seemed inclined to entertain this suggestion in the sense in which the abbess spoke, he straightway gave orders to two of his own followers to enter at once the chamber of the blameless abbess, directing them at the same time that they should only make a pretence of searching the chamber, as a place in no way to be suspected, in order that they might quickly be able to come to the other apartments. Whereupon they at once en-

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tered the room, and marking that the surface of the bed showed that someone was beneath, that at once decided within themselves that there must be a man therein; so, having drawn back the clothes, they found there the wretched Salustio half dead. As soon as they recognized who the man was, they fastened upon him like so many hounds of the chase, at the same time crying out "Ecce homo." As soon as the noise of this hurlyburly came to the ears of the bishop, he quickly made his way into the chamber with as many of his men as yet remained with him. Everyone will easily be able to judge for himself how completely overcome with amazement they all must have stood when they thus came upon the priest, clad only in his shirt, lying in the bed of the abbess, and more especially to figure the grief-stricken and betrayed abbess herself, who, standing as if she had been thunderstruck and stupified by this dire calamity, seemed to all those who looked upon her to be in sooth dead. She searched her memory, and was sure that no such man was in the bed when she had left it. Neither did she know whether this spectacle which she saw was to be reckoned as a dream, or as the truth, and it seemed to her that it was alike forbidden to her either to deny or to acknowledge this thing as real.

Madonna Chiara, as soon as she saw how the defence she had devised had been brought to serve as a remedy, and had come to the issue she desired, now dared, without taking much heed of what she said, to let burst forth over Messere the bishop, and over the poor beguiled abbess as well, a torrent of unseemly and monstrous words, saying, amongst other things, "By God's cross, I will send word to-morrow to my kinsfolk to bid them come and fetch me out of this public brothel, where priests are wont to come at night and to be found in the very bed of the woman whose bounden duty it is to hold up a good example to the others of the monastery. Hag of Satan would that fire might fall down from heaven, and by a miracle take her away from the face of the earth!" And uttering these words, and others of a like nature, she betook herself to her cell, and, angered amain, made fast the door thereof, leaving without the bishop and all the

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others overcome with amazement. The bishop, his rage now transformed into the deepest shame and grief, turned upon the wretched woe-begone priest, and made his followers quickly tie his hands and legs as if he had been a thief. Then, without saying another word by way of farewell to the grief-stricken and disgraced abbess, or to the other nuns, he went home to his house.

On the following morning, after he had considered the institution of a trial which should set to work to condemn both the prior and the priest to the flames, he made it appear to them, by the means of certain good friends, that he had abated somewhat the fury of his rage, and accordingly the fire, which, together with divers other dreadful torments, he was anxious to heap upon these sacrilegious sinners, became something vastly different through the working of the greedy humour of San Giovanni Bocco d'oro,* and thus his word proved to be of such great and singular virtue that not only were the peccant clerks freed from the death penalty which they so well deserved, but over and beyond the remission of their sins, there was granted to them plenary authority by means of which they were able to sail at will the seas which they had thitherto ploughed, and likewise over any other sea which might offer itself to their valour, without any penalty whatsoever, because, like true children of obedience, they made to Messere the bishop an offering of the tenth part which was due from them, in such wise that God ever multiplied their gains from good to better.

Behold, then, my most illustrious lord, in what manner the sagacious Chiara by her ready resource delivered herself out of the snare set for her by Messere the bishop, and, bringing under censure those who had threatened her with death by fire, came forth unharmed from her perilous situation.

* The sum of money given for a bribe, or bribery in general. See Busk's "Folk Lore of Rome," for an account of the saint.

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MASUCCIO

IN order that I may not appear, in this my task of story-telling, to swerve backwards and forwards from one subject to another, I have passed over, and still intend to pass over, certain secret matters of some value, and even indispensable, which are to be learned concerning divers of our cloistered women; and amongst the aforesaid I would include all those who are under the heel of the friars. I will therefore keep silence about the various sects and the mortal feuds which take rise between the friars and the seculars, and likewise how those nuns who perchance entangle themselves with laymen are held and esteemed to be worse even than Jewesses; how they are without respite imprisoned, chased from one place to another, and persecuted as if they were heretics; while certain others, laden with favours and dignitites, are put in office, granted full leave to do whatsoever they list, and, lastly, enjoy the greatest prerogative of all. I keep silence, likewise, concerning all that might be said on the subject of the marriage of these women with friars, cases of which I myself have chanced to fall upon more than once, and have seen the evidence thereof, and have touched the same with my own hands. How they make sumptuous marriage feasts, inviting thereto from this convent and that their friends, who present themselves with equipages laden with all manner of rich goods. They sing the mass, and they forget not to hold high revel, and to pass all manner of scoffing quips, and to dance to the sound of hidden instruments. With the consent of the abbess and of their prelate they execute marriage contracts, duly written and sealed; and then, having supped off all manner of sumptuous meats, and performed every other ceremony pertaining to the rite of marriage, they go to bed one with another without showing any fear or shame, just as if their union had been contracted with the full sanction of their own fathers, and by the laws of marriage.

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Now, although in the novel which I have just told you I have written with knowledge and forethought a certain thing in incorrect fashion—inasmuch as I said that the well-cultivated gardens of the amorous nuns were wont to produce much fruit in the shape of divers little monks—I am now determined, let this contrary statement cost me what it may, that I will not be longer silent concerning a matter which ought assuredly to be regarded with the utmost severity and detestation. I declare, therefore, that these women, in order that they may not become pregnant, make use of innumerable devices of a nature such as decency forbids me to mention. And what shall I say of them, when, the ass having escaped from his head-stall and the prolific seed having engendered its natural fœtus, they employ, so as not to suffer their offspring to come to its full maturity, an immense variety of medicines, and, both above and below, make use of so many other detestable and poisonous beverages, that by this continual vexation the innocent souls of their children are slain and violently sent down into the pit of hell before ever they have had time to taste their mother's milk, or to behold the eternal light of the skies, or to be sprinkled with the waters of holy baptism? And if any man shall declare this thing which I have written here to be a lie, let him cast his eyes upon the fœtid sewers which run from the convents, and he will find there clear proof of the murders committed therein, and he may furthermore find a burying-ground full of the tender little bones of the victims hitherto slain, not smaller than that which Herod made when he slew the innocent children of the Jews.

I know not what more I can say about this matter, save only to declare that the patience of God endures too long, and that I, having neither the ability nor the knowledge to write fully concerning the thing which I have set before you, am minded to come to the telling of my next novel in the briefest fashion I can compass; of which same novel I not long ago gave certain intelligence to the magnificent Marino Caracciolo, a most noble Parthenopean. And although grief for my dear and worthy brother* darkened my wits in such manner that I myself knew not

* Francesco Guardati, brother of the writer was a priest.

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at all what path I ought to follow in order to make a beginning of my writing; nevertheless, being now comforted by his prayers, and incited to my task by his many letters, I have persuaded myself at last to put pen to paper.

THE END OF THE SIXTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Seventh

ARGUMENT

FRA PARTENOPEO IS SEIZED WITH LOVE OF MARCHESA, AND MAKES PRETENCE OF BEING AN ADHERENT TO THE KING IN ORDER TO WIN THE FAVOUR OF THE COURT. BY THE MEANS OF A TRICK HE GETS POSSESSION OF A KEY OF THE MONASTERY, AND A COMPANION OF HIS BRINGS MARCHESA TO HIM IN HIS CELL. HE GIVES HER MONEY, WHICH SHE ENTRUSTS TO ANOTHER LOVER OF HERS: THE MATTER IS NOISED ABROAD: THE FRIAR IS CAUGHT IN DISGRACEFUL CASE, AND CONDEMNED TO PERPETUAL IMPRISONMENT.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT AND HIGH-BORN MARINO CARACCIOLO.*

EXORDIUM

SO weighty, and so just and reasonable as well, are the causes through which I find myself drawn into circumstances of heavy and unwonted affliction—circumstances which make my life appear to be naught else than a continual weariness to me, that there should be no need for you to be in any way amazed, my illustrious Marino, by the fact that up to this present time I have kept silence with you, and have written to you no line. For you may clearly observe that the hostile assaults of my spiteful fortune have not in the end prevailed so as to hinder the great love which I bear you from finding a dwelling-place in my heart, but on the other part have stirred up my anguish-stricken mind and nerveless hand to write to you this present letter, and to give you a full

* Marino Caracciolo is the subject of Novel XLIV. He was a favourite of Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, and filled many high offices of state. He fell at Otranto in 1480, fighting against the Turks.

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account of a certain event which has lately come to pass here. This I propose to do, not only to satisfy to some extent your just and reasonable wishes, but also to serve as a lasting warning for yourself, and for anyone else who in future times may happen to read it, illustrating in what fashion we should be on our guard, without ceasing, against the snares and ambushes of malignant hypocrites, and men whose religion is a counterfeit. Forasmuch as these, under the fraudulent seeming of their religious garb, resemble, not the savage wild beasts, who, driven by the barking of dogs and the uproar of the huntsmen, take refuge in their wonted haunts in the forest, but rather are like to tamed wolves, which, having become domesticated, will, when flouted and rebuked, seek the shelter of our inmost chambers, and there, protected by the cover of their natural and ill-advised presumption, encroach upon our honour and our very flesh and bones, as well as everything else we possess. Wherefore, in addition to many other experiences, this one I am about to relate shall serve you as another and a most certain proof.

THE NARRATIVE

THE clear-voiced rumour, which has already made itself heard throughout the universe, will carry a true report to those who come after, how, following upon the death of that exalted and glorious prince, King Don Alfonso of Aragon, King Don Fernando the Victorious, as the heir and only-begotten and dearly-loved son of the above-named monarch, occupied the throne of this our Sicilian realm as peaceful king and lord. In a very brief time from the date of his accession, he was duly invested with the kingdom by our most holy father the Pope,* and crowned and anointed as the most worthy sovereign thereof. When he had taken from all his barons

* Calixtus III. was Pope at King Alfonso's death in 1458, and died in the autumn of the same year. The Pope here referred to must be Pius II., as Calixtus claimed Naples as a fief of the Church, and incited the nobles to rebel in favour of the Angevins. Pius at once favoured Ferdinand's cause, and crowned him in 1459.

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and from the people as well, the homage that was due to him, and had entered into complete and peaceful possession of his kingdom, it was the will of envious and wicked fate—fickle and ill content that such perfect peace and quiet should prevail—that the flame of a deadly and pestilential war* should be kindled throughout the whole realm before the second year of his tranquil rule had elapsed.

Now in the course of all these convulsions of the state and vicissitudes of fortune the magnificent and most illustrious city of Naples showed itself more constant in faith than any other city of Italy, harassed and oppressed as it was by the perpetual sight of its enemies delivering their assaults and pursuing their depredations even in the portions of the town which they had been unable to subdue. For these, and for many other reasons as well which I find it needless here to mention, the city aforesaid became as a place wellnigh depopulated. And, amongst the other fugitives, a large proportion of the members of the religious orders—of whom the number was exceedingly great—finding no longer in the city those fertile feeding grounds to which they were accustomed, and feeling the greatest distaste for discomfort of any kind, abandoned whatever rule of order they may have adopted, and betook themselves whithersoever it might appear they would enjoy the greatest facilities for playing the sluggard, albeit they had proclaimed themselves openly vowed to hunger and cold and travail for the sake of the love of Christ.

Some few of them, however, remained behind in the city, and amongst these was a certain holy friar, by birth a Neapolitan, a preacher of great force, and holding the first place as a father confessor. In sooth, he was in no less degree inclined to examine narrowly the various beauties of the ladies and inform himself as to their riches, than he was to spy out in them any vices or want of faith which might peradventure exist. And although I know and am well acquainted with the name of this man, and of the order to which he belonged—an order of which he falsely pretended to be an obedient member—I, nevertheless, for the sake of decency, will keep silence thereanent, and will simply speak of him in this place as Fra

* The war between Ferdinand and the Angevin leaders.

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Partenopeo: This friar, unlike the others of his kind, showed no inclination to betake himself out of the city, but chose rather to remain within the walls, in order that he might be able without any restraint to have a more ample field for the prosecution of divers wicked practices of his which he had, up to that time, kept hidden and secret. In this manner, having changed himself from a shepherd into a wolf disguised under the gentle semblance of a lamb, he went about with bent neck, barefoot, and clothed in rags, so that to anyone who did not know what kind of man he really was, he would have appeared to be another Saint Ilarione.* Wherefore, after he had claimed for himself a marvellously great fame and sanctity through putting on this outward seeming, he beguiled not only many people of private estate, but even our lady the queen,† by the course he pursued. Now he would feign himself to be a headstrong partisan of the Aragonese, and now would bring into play various other deceptive tricks, working with such subtlety that in the course of time he made himself the master of all the secrets of state, however private they might have been.

It chanced that in the course of his wicked life—which, in sooth, was entirely pleasing to his own taste—he one day garnished his purse with several hundred florins, and taking with him as an associate another friar, Ungaro by name, and a rascal just as worthless as himself, the two passed by the Pendino de' Scigliati, where they saw a certain damsel, a Sicilian by birth, and endowed with a beauty which was a marvel to behold, who abode there, and was accustomed—albeit much against her will—to make public traffic of herself for the sake of gain. The reverend father, although he had just come back from a piratical emprise which had yielded him rich gain—gain which he had in friendly wise shared with his partner—as soon as he caught sight of and closely scanned these exquisite beauties which were exposed for sale so cheaply and for the smallest price, was seized with the desire forthwith to secure for himself this tempting bit of merchan-

* One of the earliest followers of Antony of the Thebaid. He lived forty-eight years in a morass near Gaza.

† Isabella di Chiaromonte, wife of Ferdinand I.

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dize at one stroke, so fiercely was he inflamed with desire to possess the damsel. Wherefore, having drawn anigh her, he addressed her in these words, spoken in devout wise: "My daughter, will you endeavour to come to-morrow to our church for the health of your soul, and for your own satisfaction?" To him the damsel made answer that she would willingly betake herself whither he asked her to go.

Taken thus in the toils, and inflamed with desire, he went back to his house, and, having made manifest to his dear friend Ungaro how great was his passion, and informed him of all the schemes he proposed to carry out thereanent, he awaited with the greatest impatience the coming of the following morning in order that he might bring his work to its completion. And when the aforesaid time had come, and when he had gone up into the pulpit, he had scarcely made a beginning of his sermon when his eyes fell upon the looked-for damsel as she entered the church, attired in such comely and modest fashion that the amorous flames in his captured heart—now, in sooth, newly bound by love's fetters—were kindled two thousandfold. As soon as his sermon had come to an end, there gathered around him quickly a crowd of people, both of men and of women, some to ask advice of him, and some to beg favours. But he, having firmly fixed his thoughts upon another matter, said to them: "My children, have you not heard the words of Christ in the gospel which was read to you this morning, telling you how there is more rejoicing and praise in the celestial choir over the conversion of one soul which has wandered astray, than there is over ninety-nine of those who are perfect and stand in no need of repentance? And now for this reason I am taken with the desire to see whether I cannot cause to enter one single spark of spiritual love into the frozen heart of this poor young girl here."

Having thus spoken he took the damsel by the hand, and led her to the seat where confessions were wont to be heard; and, after he had wrapped himself in his cloak, he began, with a great show of kindness, to put questions to her as to the cause which had led her to place herself at the service of whatever man might desire her, and to

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submit to be the slave of those who make a traffic in human flesh.* The damsel, albeit through the character of her life she was in no wise lacking in understanding, was unable to fathom the deep malignity of his hidden heart; so, weeping plentifully, she recounted to him in the briefest fashion she could use the complete history of the unfortunate thing which had come to pass with her. Thereupon, in answer to her, the friar spake: "My daughter, He who alone is privy to the secrets of all men shall be my witness as to how great is the bitterness of heart with which I have listened to the story of your ill-starred fate, and likewise how great an injury I rate it that I see you still abiding in this guilty condition. And on this account, whenever you may make provision to withdraw yourself entirely from the same, and to become worthy of a husband, I now make to you the offer of all my wealth, which you will find great enough in itself to suffice amply to furnish you with a fair and most convenient estate. Over and beyond this, I desire that, from this day forth, you should take into your entire possession both this body and this soul of mine, provided that I may behold you delivered from that gloomy prison in which, according to what you have yourself told me, you abide with such great distaste; giving you good assurance that, with your gracious and prudent seeming and with your loveliness—which, in sooth, is more divine than human—you have taken possession of me in such wise that, in the last few minutes, I seem to have become your property much more than my own; in short, I am yours entirely. Therefore I beseech you, my sweetest life, to let your pity move you, both on your own account and on mine as well, to consent to seek retirement in the house of a certain widow lady, who is devoted to our order, with whom you can continue to abide without any ill-fame or scandal whatsoever. When you are there it shall be my care to see that you enjoy all those things in which you take the greatest delight, until such time as the Creator shall be pleased to send to us some worthy and discreet youth to whom I may give you for his wife, which thing I, in my heart, desire most keenly."

* Orig., *e fattasi serva degli beccarini di carne umana.*

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The damsel who up to this present moment had been very far indeed from gathering any inkling of this matter, which, in working upon the friar's gross lasciviousness, had made him burn thus ardently to disclose to her his passion, now, like a prudent girl, saw clearly that a certain report which she had heretofore judged to be a false one was indeed true, to wit, that this infernal crew of worthless poltroons held the better part of Christendom as their prey. Wherefore she, who knew well enough how to dispose of the wares she had to sell, as soon as she perceived how the friar was so keenly set on purchasing them for his use, forthwith made up her mind that, not only would she be careful not to give them away for nought, but that she would only sell them at the very highest price. So she answered him in these words: "My father, I thank you, forsooth, for your great goodness and charity, but I must tell you, so that you may know the truth of the matter, that I am on terms with my good man such as will in no wise suffer me to do always the thing I would; for the reason that he, being a sprightly youth and rich, as well as much loved and very popular in this our city, would, I doubt not, cast a thousand lives in jeopardy to keep me for himself, should he find that there was any danger of losing me; and then, after that, might spoil the look of my face by way of saving his honour.* Nevertheless, time has a way of setting things right, and on this account you will see that I, if I may be able to serve you in any way whatever, shall be no less eager to give myself to you than you have shown yourself eager to be mine."

The friar, perceiving that the affair would at least come to the issue of satisfying the greater part of his desire, and caring very little for aught besides, then made answer to the girl, whose name was Marchesa, in this fashion: "You speak very wisely, O my daughter, and may God bless you; but when shall we find occasion and commodity to be together, seeing that I am in no wise inclined to put faith in that bravo of yours?" To this the damsel replied, "There is no need at all to be fearful on the score of him; for, over and beyond the fact that he is by nature much

* Orig., *e doppo per suo onore guastarmi della persona.*

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given to secrecy, and is in the way of gaining for himself no little profit thereby, it is beyond all belief, as you indeed have already said, that he should seek to give himself a blow on the foot with the mattock.* Wherefore, make yourself easy on this account, and leave the rest of the trouble to me." Then said the friar, "Since the view you take is one which also pleases me, there remains nothing more to be done for the carrying out of our design than that, at the hour to-night when I shall send a trusty companion of mine to you bearing with him a dress of our order, you should betake yourself in his company to me disguised in the habit of a friar, while I will devise means by which I may, acting with all due caution, give you reception in my cell."

The damsel was quite content with this proposal, and agreed to abide by the directions which the friar gave her. Then he, filled with desire, besought her that she would let him have a kiss by way of earnest; whereupon Marchesa, in order that she might thereby make burn still more violently the flame of his passion, put out to him, in as pleasing fashion as she could, her serpentine tongue, being prevented by the iron grating which was fixed to the seat of confession from bestowing upon him the full boon of her delicious mouth. With this touch of sweetness she stole away and went forthwith to her own house, where by chance she found the man who was her keeper, and him she at once began to address in the following words: "My good Griffone, I went this morning into the street, hoping that someone or other would take me for his pleasure; but now, if you will be wise and prudent, you will see that I have caught a bird by the beak, one well furnished with feathers, the plucking out of which will be fine sport for us for many months to come." Then, having made a beginning at the very first, she told to him the whole story, point by point, to the end thereof. Griffone, when he had listened to it, was mightily diverted with the same, and in sooth the time seemed to him to be as long as a thousand years until there should come in sight that

* Orig., *cercasi donarsi la zappa ne lo piede.*

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Hungarian flyboat, sent to take in tow the Sicilian bark.*

Now to come to the other part of the story. Brother Wolf, who was all this while in a state of the greatest joy, and at the same time keenly set upon bringing into speedy execution the project he had framed, went quickly into the presence of the queen, so as to make sure of securing himself from any molestation on the part of the other friars, and began to address her in these words: "Sacred majesty, it is a thing clearly known to me that no man occupying a station like mine finds it seemly and convenient to wait upon the favour of any earthly power. Wherefore I, looking at myself only as a Christian man, find myself obliged perforce to conform to the will of our lord the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ upon earth, and the most holy Shepherd of our blessed mother the Church.† Nevertheless, though it seems to me that I am right in doing this, I am not only bound as a faithful partisan to our lord the king and to your majesty, but am also eager to undergo in your service the most cruel of martyrdoms, just as I should desire to suffer the same for the sake of our holy Catholic faith. It occurs to me, therefore, my sovereign lady—not thereby to speak evil of others, which thing may God forbid—that the greater part of our brothers are men such as might be rated by the world as of little or no account, for the reason that they are not endowed with the same righteous and prudent purposes as I myself harbour. In any case, therefore, some irretrievable cause of offence may very well arise, and on this account I, knowing well enough that I must needs guard myself very carefully against them, find that it behoves me to provide myself with some safeguard in the business I propose to undertake. Wherefore, if I should bring into my cell by night any faithful partisan of yours, and devoted to me as well, who might let it be known to me

* Orig., *mille anni gli parea che la fusta di Ungaria venesse a rimborcare la Siciliana barca.*

† Pius II. favoured Ferdinand, for the reason that he was unwilling to stir up a war which might tempt the Turks to invade Italy. Calixtus III., during the few months he lived after Ferdinand's accession, favoured the Angevin cause.

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what men are thinking of or doing in the city, or perchance to instruct me by what secret and hidden means we may be able to put our hands upon moneys for the service of our lord the king, or to hold converse with me on a thousand other things which may come up for discussion, I would fain have such as these conducted into my presence, this one dressed in the habit of a friar, and that one and the other under various disguising garbs. Moreover, the gatekeepers at our convent are so exceedingly sharp, that in their curiosity to spy and to peer minutely into the smallest particulars attending the coming of anyone to our gates, they would bring it to pass that any such visitors as these I have spoken of would assuredly determine in their minds to return whence they came, rather than to trust themselves in the hands of those they know not. Now in what measure, from one hour to another, an accident such as this might work, either for the wrecking or the furtherance of the fortunes of our lord the king, your majesty may find it easy to determine. At any rate, it seems to me—and on this matter I make my prayer to you in the most urgent terms I can find—that in order that we may free ourselves from all actual and all possible dangers as well, you should without delay give your command to our prelate, and bid him furnish me, for my absolute use, a key of the monastery, to be employed by me in the service of your interests. I would likewise beg you to direct him to give due admonition to all those dwelling within the convent, that no one of them should, under any pretence whatever, give trouble or molestation to any person who may come to have speech with me, whether by night or by day; and furthermore that he should assign to me, for my sole use, a chamber apart from the others, in which I may at any hour give private audience to my visitors without letting them be put to any inconvenience thereanent."

The queen, who put the fullest and the most unquestioning faith in all that the good friar told her, was at once persuaded that his most adroit speech was based upon true and sincere motives, wherefore she first thanked him abundantly in return for the same, and then, having summoned into her presence a certain courtier who had her

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fullest confidence, she despatched him forthwith to the superior of the convent with the command that the aforesaid request of Fra Partenopeo should at once be complied with, without any exception whatever being made thereto.

When, therefore, everything which the friar demanded was thus fully carried out according to his wishes in a very brief time, and when, having got possession of the key, and without any delay furnished with all requisites a chamber fitted for any gallant, the night so keenly longed for came at last. Then Fra Partenopeo despatched his friend Fra Ungaro to bring thither Marchesa disguised in the habit of a friar; and he was not called upon to suffer any long delay, for he soon saw returning this trusty hunter of his, who, without the aid of hounds of any sort, was already bringing home the booty. He went at once to meet them, and, having taken the lady in his embrace, he covered her with the most passionate and burning kisses and led her within into the chamber, uttering the while a thousand sweet and loving words. When they had despatched the feast, which was fully worthy of the occasion, the friar gave leave to his friend Ungaro to depart, whereupon the two lovers went to bed to take their pleasure, and there to give tangible proof that friars still knew full well how to make others dance to the sound of the drumsticks, forasmuch as it may be remarked that before the matin bells began to ring the cock had nine times crowed.

Now Fra Ungaro was stationed all this time without the chamber, and hearing within so much sportive clatter like the beating of a paper-mill, and being himself vastly unlike a man of stone such as Medusa might have made, but, on the other hand, one full of lusty life, his own amorous fancies began to arise and to torment him somewhat. Finding himself assailed by these lecherous heats even more than was his wont, he was minded forthwith to have recourse to the same practice which the scullions use in the kitchen when, overcome by their greedy appetites, and fearful lest they should mar and befoul the meat meant for their masters, they eat dry bread savoured merely by the smell of the roast. Now in what fashion the business was brought about by the friar I ween anyone will be able to understand without farther explanation from me.

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And when at last the morning was come, and the reverend father was minded to send the young woman back to her home well content with the result of her errand, he having given her certain of his more precious jewels, and opened his strong box filled to the brim with money, said to her, laughing the while: "Dear soul of mine, men of our condition are not wonted ever to touch money, wherefore do you now take as much thereof as may please you from this my store." After hearing these words she did not wait for many invitations, or show herself unwilling to do as the friar asked; but, having stretched forth her delicate hand, she straightway caught up therein as much of the coin as she could seize. Then, after she had once more put on all her attire and given the friar a close and amorous kiss, she took her way back to her own house under the conduct of Fra Ungaro, and, having come thither, she threw the money into the lap of Griffone, discoursing to him at the same time as to what point the affair had come already, and how she had set a bait for the friar in such wise that they must assuredly capture him, and in a very short time strip every bit of flesh from his bones.

Thereupon they together regaled themselves with a sumptuous feast, and, being keenly set upon laying their hands upon the residue of the friar's money, it came to pass that Marchesa let her feet travel full often in the road she had begun to tread. To her, and to the friar as well, sport of this kind gave much content, though for different reasons. Howbeit, the amorous passion of the friar grew stronger day by day, and the charges therefor and the gifts to the young woman showed no sign of waning. However, that strong box we have before mentioned as brimful was now emptied of its contents to such degree that a blind man might with ease have discerned the bottom thereof; whereupon Marchesa, for the reason that she was one well versed in traffic of this nature, soon found out how things were going with him, and then, with feigned pretexts of all sorts, began to refuse to continue her visits to the friar, for which reason he, who was entirely under the sway of his unbridled lust, perforce became aware, albeit very late, that the young woman

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was attracted to come to him for the sake of his goods, and not for his own sake. Therefore he began to sharpen his wits and to cast about as to how he should set to work to fill up once more that empty chest of his with a fresh store of money, and having, through the assistance of his friend Fra Ungaro, discovered in the church of their monastery a vast quantity of coin which had been hidden therein by a certain citizen who was now banished the state, he took possession of about five hundred florins of the same, and gave the residue thereof into the keeping of the court, betaking himself after this to the prosecution of his interrupted amours.

Then, having secured himself with the greatest care with regard to those about him, he would not only repair by night to the ill-famed house of Marchesa in the company of his friend Fra Ungaro, but they would even go thither often by day, demeaning themselves in such wise that the report of their iniquitous doings was spread abroad by the mouth of everyone, and was made a public scandal. When things had come to this pass, particular information of the same was given to the prelate of Fra Partenopeo's monastery by the mouth of a certain noble youth, who perchance may have been one of those beloved by Marchesa. The prelate, in order no longer to suffer the perfect religion he professed to be sullied by association with such a son of perdition, got information how, on a certain night, Fra Partenopeo was going unaccompanied by Fra Ungaro to take his pleasure with Marchesa; wherefore he betook himself secretly at the same hour to the house of the young woman, accompanied by a large number of the friars of his monastery and of other gentlemen, devoted friends of the order. And when they had got the culprit safe in hand, over and above the cruel scourging which they gave to Fra Partenopeo, whom they found stark naked in the bed with Marchesa, they condemned him to lie for the rest of his life in prison, where he finished his days in bitter misery.

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MASUCCIO

IF the severe and altogether merited punishment dealt out to our brother Fra Partenopeo may have been in the past, or may prove in the future, to be the cause of making other men withdraw themselves from reprobate vices, and from working every day some fresh evil, it may not only be called laudable in itself, but may be held up to high commendation, and be kept in lasting memory by men of righteous lives. But forasmuch as the contrary may peradventure come to pass, it seems to me that we must not on any account suffer men in such case to live their lives in peace while thus steeped in wickedness. And since that we may in all truth set down a generation so froward as this as being endowed with a nature like to that of wolves—which beasts, when through some accident or other a certain member of the wolfish pack may chance to meet with a wound, and therefore be unable to follow with the others, will all turn upon him and mangle him in their rage as if he had been one of their foes—so in like manner these reverend signors bear themselves at those seasons when there may chance to fall upon any member of their order some grave and manifest scandal, some offence too glaring to be shielded from view by the fraudulent cover of their religious habit. Then no amount of cruel and continuous scourgings, or endless persecutions, or sentences of lifelong imprisonment, will suffice for his condemnation; and for their adoption of such a course as this there are two most manifest reasons. The one is to give warning and affright to the other friars, so that they may not by their heedless carriage let their doings of this sort get into the mouths of the crowd and become common scandal; the other is that they, as persecutors of ill-deeds, may obtain yet greater credit and trust from the laity. And to show you that such is the truth, I will tell you that, not many days agone, finding myself with certain members of this order, and talking with them concerning this very same matter, one of the number—and one moreover by no means the least in

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credit and repute, and a man on very familiar footing with me—addressed me in these words: "My good Masuccio, if on account of one ship which may have suffered shipwreck on the voyage from Alexandria all the other vessels should refuse to go to sea, not a single grain of pepper should we ever eat. Of a truth the gibbet is put up for the unlucky ones."

From discourse such as this one may take as evidence the fact that the most nefarious wickedness which these men commit appears to them to be nothing more than what is permitted by well-approved usage, so that they give themselves up to the practice thereof without feeling the least prick of shame or of conscience. Neither the fear of God, nor the risk of a shameful death, has any power to hold them back when once they begin to throw off the cowl. And therefore, to bring forward more cogent evidence than that given above, I will set forth clearly in the novel which follows certain words spoken, without any regard to decency whatever, by a famous preacher and reverend master in the Holy Scriptures, in answer to certain scholars, words as bad as any lewd soldier could have uttered.

THE END OF THE SEVENTH NOVEL

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Novel the Eighth

ARGUMENT

A YOUNG LAWYER, HAVING NO TASTE FOR HIS STUDIES, SELLS HIS BOOKS AND LIVES JOVIALLY WITH THE MONEY HE RECEIVES THEREFOR. A PREACHING FRIAR PROMISES THAT HE WILL MAKE THE DEAD ARISE FROM THEIR GRAVES ON A CERTAIN DAY WHEN THE YOUNG LAWYER AND DIVERS COMPANIONS OF HIS HAPPEN TO BE PRESENT IN THE CHURCH, WHEREUPON THESE CONSIDER HOW THEY MAY ANNOY THE PREACHER WITH A WITTY PLEASANTRY, BUT HE TAKES HIS REVENGE UPON THEM AFTERWARDS BY A PROMPT AND APPROPRIATE REPLY.

TO THE NOBLE AND VIRTUOUS FRANCISCO SCALES, THE SECRETARY TO THE KING

EXORDIUM

I AM of opinion, my most courteous Scales, that at the opening of this our friendship it appertains to me as a duty to make a beginning of our written intercourse according to the custom which friends well agreed are wont to follow amongst themselves. On this account I, not wishing to appear in any way ungrateful for all the honours and choice fruits which have come to me through your most pleasant friendship, propose to approach you at this present season, not merely with such familiar correspondence as men are accustomed to hold one with another, but in the light of an exceptional friend. And, in addition to this, it has occurred to me that it would prove to you a seemly diversion, and one worthy of consideration, were I to tell you, out of the store I have, a certain tale: This same story, when you shall read it over at your leisure, may serve to remind you of the discreet conversa-

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tion we have held one with another. And albeit it is never a matter of praise for a man to be on over-intimate terms with those vowed to religion, you shall, nevertheless, be brought to see clearly how much less blameworthy in certain men is the conversation which they show to the world every day in their outward seeming, than the things which abide in the core of their hearts. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

NAPLES, that noteworthy city, deservedly set down as the chief place of this our Sicilian kingdom, is, and will ever remain, most flourishing in arms and in letters, as exemplified in the excellences of its highborn citizens. There, not many years agone from this our time, lived a certain doctor of laws, of honourable descent, very rich, and of excellent manners and repute. This man, over and above the other goods granted to him by fortune, was blessed with one only son, who was called by name Jeronimo di Vitavolo. Now, seeing that the father had bestowed all his love upon this youth, and was greatly desirous to leave him, when he himself should pass to another world, endowed with divers virtues which —putting riches on one side—should abide with him as immutable possessions, he set himself with all diligence to lead the youth's steps into the paths of study. And when the father was brought to understand that his son's head was one by no means fitted for a career of this sort, and had, moreover, many times poured out his grief thereanent, both to himself in solitude, and to his near kindred as well, he sent word to his son Jeronimo, and bade him come to his bedside, he being withal full of years, and bound in a very short time to taste of death. Thereupon he appointed his son the inheritor of all his goods, and, having laid a charge upon the youth how that it was his bounden duty to give good heed to the study of the law, he bequeathed to him also all his books, which were of very great value. Thus, having put in order all his affairs, in a very short space of time he passed away from

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this perishable life, leaving behind him a highly honoured name, and was borne to the tomb with high and sumptuous ceremonies.

Jeronimo, who now occupied the place of master and head of the house, found himself in possession of many thousand florins in ready money. Wherefore the youth, seeing that he himself had endured no labour and weariness in gathering together the same, forthwith made up his mind not to place his affections in possessions of this sort, and at once began to array himself in sumptuous garments, to taste the pleasures of the town in the company of certain chosen companions of his, to indulge in amorous adventures, and in a thousand other ways to dissipate his substance abroad without restraint of any kind. Not only did he banish from his mind all thought and design of continuing his studies, but he even went so far as to harbour against the books, which his father had held in such high esteem and reverence and had bequeathed to him, the most fierce and savage hatred. So violent, indeed, was his resentment against them that he set them down as the worst foes he had in the world.

On a certain day it happened that the young man, either by accident or on account of some occasion of his own, betook himself into the library of his dead father, and there his eye fell upon a vast quantity of fair and well-arranged books such as are wont to be found in places of this sort. At the first sight of these he was somewhat stricken with fear, and with a certain apprehension that the spirit of his father might persue him; but, having recollected his courage somewhat, he turned with a look of hatred on his face towards the aforesaid books and began to address them in the following terms: "Books, books, so long as my father was alive you waged against me war unceasing, forasmuch as he spent all his time and trouble either in purchasing you, or in putting you in fair bindings; so that, whenever it might happen that there came upon me the need of a few florins or of certain other articles, which all youths find necessary, he would always refuse to let me have them, saying that it was his will and pleasure to dispense his money only in the purchase of such books as might please him. And over and beyond

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this, he purposed in his mind that I, altogether against my will, should spend my life in close companionship with you, and over this matter there arose between us many times angry and disordered words. Many times also you have put me in danger of being driven into perpetual exile from this my home. Therefore it cannot but be pleasing to God—since it is no fault of yours that I was not hunted forth from this place—that I should send you packing from this my house in such fashion that not a single one of you will ever behold my door again. And, in sooth, I wonder more especially that you have not before this disordered my wits, a feat you might well have accomplished with very little more trouble on your part, in your desire to do with me as you did with my father, according to my clear recollection. He, poor man, as if he had become bemused through conversing with you alone, was accustomed to demean himself in strange fashion, moving his hands and his head in such wise that over and over again I counted him to be one bereft of reason. Now, on account of all this, I bid you have a little patience, for the reason that I have made up my mind to sell you all forthwith, and thus in a single hour to avenge myself for all the outrages I have suffered on your behalf, and, over and beyond this, to set myself free from the possible danger of going mad."

After he had thus spoken, and had packed up divers volumes of the aforesaid books—one of his servants helping him in the work—he sent the parcel into the house of a certain lawyer, who was a friend of his, and then in a very few words came to an agreement with the lawyer as to the business, the issue of the affair being that, though he had simply thrown the books out of his house and had not sold them, he received, nevertheless, on account of the same, several hundred florins; and with these, added to those which still remained in his purse, he continued to pursue the course of pleasure he had begun.

And on this account, either because he was now very rich, or because of his wit and pleasant humour, it came to pass that he was always to be seen in the company of the most proper young men of the city. Wherefore, happening to repair one day with certain of his friends to the

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venerable church of San Lorenzo, he found there in the pulpit a very learned father preaching to the people, and giving notice that, on the following morning, he purposed to deliver a sermon on the subject of the Last Judgment, in the course of which he intended to make rise up again the dead kinsfolk of anyone who might chance to be there. On hearing this, it came into the mind of the aforesaid Jeronimo to frame in appropriate wise a witty saying which should bear on the matter in question.

When the morning was come, the young man, with his band of friends, and a certain doctor of laws whom they had taken into their company, made their way into the church, and, having withdrawn themselves apart in modest fashion, waited with pleasure for the moment when the preacher should make a beginning of his sermon. When at last the preacher went up into the pulpit, and with the utmost fervour began to discourse concerning the Last Judgment, standing with his head uncovered, and moving himself in exactly the same manner as a falcon uses when it is freed from the hood, he turned himself without ceasing towards a part of the church where there was sitting a certain widow lady with whom he was deeply enamoured, managing the while to continue his sermon without break or interruption of any sort. Now when he had come to that terrible phrase, "Venite mortui ad judicium," as soon as the words had passed his lips a couple of trumpeters, whom he had concealed in the pulpit, began to blow a harsh and frightful blast in such fashion that the whole congregation was altogether astonished and amazed—nay, they were even as people thunderstricken and confounded. I will not stop here to mention certain good folk (who had come peradventure from Grosseto), who, as soon as they heard the sound, began to run about, now here, now there, amongst the tombs, expecting that, in good sooth, the dead would then and there arise from their graves.

Jeronimo, in the meantime, was standing apart with the companions who had come in with him, and laughing heartily at the brutishness of the stupid crowd of peasants. As soon as he perceived how there arose from them on every side weeping and lamentation and cries for

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mercy, without understanding in any way the cause of what they did, it seemed to him that the time had at length come when he might let forth that witty speech of his which he had duly fashioned in his mind; so, having drawn from his purse a counterfeit florin, he turned towards the doctor of laws, who was still in the company, and spake to him in this wise: "I am well assured that amongst those who will first rise from the dead will be my father, for the reason that no one could possibly match him in the scanty provision he made for me, and that he will certainly want to know from me the reason why I have not prosecuted my studies, and will now and again require at my hands those books of his, and will lay to my charge a thousand other complaints. Wherefore take this florin as your fee, and then as my advocate you can reply in my name this morning in such wise that we shall for certain win our cause." When he had brought this speech to an end, and when all those standing by had listened to this witty jest of his, they were all so struck with admiration at the grace and the finish of his words, that the doctor of laws, and all the others as well, began to laugh so loudly that it seemed as if they must split their sides. The preacher, who was high up in his pulpit, and some distance removed from the spot where the young men stood, turned himself round in the fashion which prudent steersmen use when they would know from which quarter the wind blows, and without any difficulty perceived what Jeronimo had done, and heard the loud laughter which the young men in his company sent up on account of the weeping and lamentation of the rest of the uncouth crowd in the church. At the same time he was in no wise sure that they suspected aught as to the trick he himself had just played; so, seeing that he was a very astute practitioner, a ready and excellent speaker, and over and beyond this a man entirely free from hypocrisy, he determined in his mind that he would get to know from them the cause of their laughter, and, if it should prove to be that which he suspected, to cap their jest with a ready and well-fitting answer of his own. Wherefore, as soon as the sermon had come to an end, he betook himself without a moment's delay to the place where

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Jeronimo and his troop of friends were posted, and, having saluted them all with a friendly smile, he addressed them in these terms: "My good young gentlemen, if it be not an unseemly request to make, I beg you that you will let me know the reason why, when all the rest of the people in the church were weeping and lamenting, you were all laughing so merrily." Jeronimo, deeming that the priest was curious to know this thing on account of some silly conceit, as is the wonted behaviour of many of those holding similar rank, and knowing naught what the lining of his cloak was like, came forward and answered him in the following words, desiring at the same time to give him a smart hit by way of repartee: "My father, you have in sooth made us feel absolute faith in the fulfillment of your promises, wherefore we are here awaiting the resurrection from the dead of a very lovely young woman who died of the plague when our city was last visited by that pest. She, when the sickness was on her, was abandoned by her husband, a man void of all merciful feeling; wherefore she sent for me, who loved her more than I loved my own life, and I straightway did all I could on her behalf by the calling in of physicians, and by the employment of every remedy I could think of as fitted for the case, and such as would naturally be suggested by the great love I had for her. On account of what I had done in her behalf, and to show her gratitude for the benefits she had received at my hands, she gave herself entirely to me in the presence of several witnesses, promising that when she should be restored to health she would choose to belong to me, and not to her husband. The poor young woman, however, died on account of her sickness, and she lies buried in this your church. Now I am possessed with the thought that peradventure her husband may by this time feel a tardy repentance for his niggard cruelty, and that, when the report of this resurrection of the dead, which you proposed to bring about, should come to his ears, he would repair hither, accompanied by the whole of his kinsfolk, in order to lead back his wife to his house. Therefore I, bearing in mind these facts, on my part brought hither my advocate, and paid him a very high fee, in order that he might defend this

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most just cause of mine, and lay the same plainly before you with all boldness and confidence, knowing well that you are a veritable adept and most excellent arbiter in everything connected with the amorous passion. Wherefore, if it had come to pass that the marvel you promised had really happened, my advocate would have laid down publicly a most righteous exposition as to what ought to be done. But when in the end we saw how this feat you promised to do turned out to be nothing more than a vain fiction, coming to the same issue which your plausible speeches so often find, we laughed thereanent, and made sport in such fashion as you perceived."

The crafty friar, as soon as he heard this egregious and well-composed version of the story—albeit he no longer entertained the suspicion he had originally taken up—determined in his mind that the speech he had just listened to should not remain without a rejoinder which should be worthy of it, or even go beyond it, and at the same time he resolved to teach these young men what kind of fat his brain was made of.* Wherefore, having turned himself towards Jeronimo, he spake in these words: "You there, who are laymen, are accustomed to take your pleasure with your ladies as long as they remain young, but as soon as old age comes upon them, and they are found fit for no better task than to charm worms out of children or to nurse the mother sickness,† you hand them over to us in order that we may flay them. And when they come to us, confessing their sins, and telling us long stories of all the delights they enjoyed with you whilst they were in the flower of their youth, we get nothing else from listening to such discourses but a redoubled increase of our troubles, already too heavy for us to bear. And when it happens that some one or other of these may quit this life, they are quickly despatched to the care of the friars, and then we, wrapping up the decaying corpse greatly against our will, are bound to bury it. In this wise, therefore, you take your delight in women while their flesh is soft and delicate, and we are vexed and troubled through having to care for their decaying bones. Now, on account of such reasons

* Orig., *de che grasso il suo cervello fosse condito.*

† Orig., *medicare le matrone.*

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as these, you may well understand in what fashion we poor friars are tormented by such as you, and how it is that, of all the things there are in the world, we can win by our industry naught but such rewards as I have just described to you. But we have one grievance which we find it hard work to bear with patience, and by this I mean the fact that we are not allowed to keep for ourselves in peace and quiet those women who have put on the monastic garb, whom we from the beginning of time have most justly claimed as our own. And would to God that you might find it enough to only lay hands on that one portion of womankind which does not already by the claims of reason belong to you, and that you would give over your incitements to them to rob us, as is their habit, and then to hand over their plunder to you. If indeed there be anyone who can give true testimony of this thing, I surely am he, forasmuch as, since I have been in this city of yours, to my own great concern I have come to know well in what fashion the matter is brought to pass. And our religion would assuredly be in a perilous state were it not that certain fellows of our kind, and not of the best complexion —to whom you with scant wit give far too much credit, albeit that they take upon themselves the style of Observantists—have assumed the task of reviling your honour and your estate as well, and for the love of our order inflict upon you vengeance for the aforesaid injuries. And you, unsatisfied still with the deeds above recited, now come and put into our hands dishes filled with dead and putrifying things, so as not to turn in any way from the path which you have begun to travel. Nevertheless, if it should chance that any one of you may desire to make a final trial as to whether or not I am a worthy judge of all varieties in amorous commerce, and a supreme arbiter of the humours thereof, let him bring to me a handsome girl alive and healthy, and, after I shall have set her apart for my own uses—as I hope reason will allow—and after the inquiry shall have been brought to its appointed end, I will deliver concerning the question in hand a decision so complete and so just, that it cannot fail to be pleasing in the highest degree to the girl herself; and, however much every one of the litigants may cry out for an appeal,

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no appeal of any sort will be permitted. May you all live in peace, and may God be with you!"

Jeronimo and all his companions were astonished and even confounded by the commendable and witty reply of the friar, and all agreed in declaring that this one, at least, could claim to be somewhat less base than the others of the lazy crowd of rascals of the same sort; but I myself, with the scanty wit I call my own, would persuade everybody to drive them all as far as possible away from the bounds of their dwelling-places without making any distinction whatever.

MASUCCIO

I DOUBT not but that there will be found many men of this our time, of the sort which takes great delight in reproving others, who will seize this opportunity of lecturing me, and will condemn me inasmuch as I declared that the preacher described in the foregoing novel ought to have had some measure of censure dealt out to him on account of his lascivious remarks. Although I could easily, by my own reasoning powers, make answer to such as these, still, in order to give greater weight to my statement, and as an example to posterity, I find I shall do well to bring forward as a defender of my position the irreproachable authority of our new Saint Paul. I speak of Fra Roberto da Lecce,* the herald of truth. He, forsooth, holds as a firm conviction, and one which he proves by the most valid arguments, that those priests who observe perfectly all the precepts of their several rules in such wise as they were settled and appointed by their holy founders, have, in these our days, grown very scarce on the earth. Then, coming at last to give particular information concerning his own minor friars, he declares

* He was a Franciscan of the Observantist Order. There is a notice in Graziani of his preaching in Perugia in 1448. He preached from a stone pulpit, which is still to be seen outside the cathedral, to a crowd of 15,000 people in the piazza below. On Good Friday he commemorated the Crucifixion by a sort of

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that, amongst these, those friars who are eager to be known as Observantists are notoriously found wanting in those most weighty duties which were laid upon them by their seraphic Saint Francis, while they keep inviolably certain useless and superstitious practices. That is, they themselves wear sandals more coarse and ill-made than ever Saint Francis saw, so as to show themselves humble and poor and obedient in the sight of the ignorant multitude. They garb themselves in patched cloaks of various colours, with a leather strap for a buckle and a bit of wood for a button, and use all manner of other similar marks of hypocrisy, such as were never written down or thought of in their holy rules.

Nor, on the other hand, will I keep silence as to how these men—disobeying the necessary rules of humility—trespass on all that is necessary for the cultivation of the same, and become not only proud, puffed up, and full of ostentation, but also more covetous of fame and rewards than any other men who live—how every day that passes they rebel in their obedience towards their prelates. These last offenders are for the most part those who, having taken up the calling of preaching, ride about the country on mules, attended by servants on foot, and with asses laden with provender—men who might be more readily taken for herbalists or quacks than for the servants of God.

But what shall I say of those confessors who observe the precepts of religious piety so far as these forbid them to touch money which they know to be counterfeit, but at the same time heap up as much of good coin as they can lay hands on; in sooth it seems as if the insatiable voracity of such as these can never be satisfied. And thus, openly

theatrical show—a barber of the city, naked, bearing a cross on his shoulder, and a crown of thorns on his head, came out of the cathedral and went in procession through the city. His preaching led to a vast increase in the ranks of his order. In 1482 he was in Rome when the Orsini and Colonna feuds threatened to become a civil war, and on one occasion, when the piazza in front of the Pantheon was filled with fighting men, Fra Roberto came out of the church of Sta. Maria sopra Minerva, and merely by holding out the crucifix and praying for peace put an end to the conflict.

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going astray from the two distinct precepts and solemn vows aforesaid, they maintain that they have been dispensed therefrom by the authority of the supreme Pontiffs; from the third vow, that of chastity, they daily grant unto themselves dispensation without papal authority of any kind whatever. Wretched indeed is the lot of those who allow their households to hold any intercourse with them. We may begin, therefore, by laying it down as certain that such of these as do not practise aught of superstition or hypocrisy should be honoured and held dear and commended as being the least wicked of the breed, and that all the others should be hunted out and banished by us into exile for life by a perpetual decree. But to leave off talking about them for the present, I will go on to speak in this next ninth novel of mine about a certain priest who, having been denied the privilege of taking carnal knowledge of a young woman, the wife of his gossip, brought all his wits into play in order to compass the object of their common desire.

THE END OF THE EIGHTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Ninth

ARGUMENT

A CERTAIN PRIEST HAS AN INTRIGUE WITH THE WIFE OF HIS GOSSIP. THIS HAVING COME TO THE HUSBAND'S EARS, HE IN HIS JEALOUSY FORBIDS THE PRACTICE; WHEREUPON THE YOUNG WOMAN PRETENDS THAT SHE IS POSSESSED BY A SPIRIT. ON THIS ACCOUNT THEY SEND THE HUSBAND ON A PILGRIMAGE, AND THEN THE PRIEST GOES BACK TO TAKE HIS PLEASURE WITH THE WIFE WITHOUT BEING SUSPECTED BY ANYBODY.

TO THE NOBLY-BORN MESSER DRAGONETTO BONIFACIO. *

EXORDIUM

IN calling back to memory, my nobly-born and distinguished cavalier, how we two together have many times and often considered, while confabulating on various subjects, how very limited and scanty is the faith that one can and ought to give to anything concerned either with priests or with monks or with friars, I am now reminded that I might, for the further confirmation of these opinions, while telling you the story of a mighty humourous adventure, furnish to all well-advised listeners tidings concerning the unwonted craft which priests have lately learned to use in their goings and comings. These men forsooth, perceiving that the society and conversation of women are denied to them because of their religious vows, now scheme to become allied to young and beautiful women by the tie of spiritual brotherhood, thereby making no account of the violation of the most glorious sacrament of baptism—a rite which contains within itself

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated "Al magnifico Messer Cavalerino d'Arezzo."

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so large a portion of the essence of our Christian faith. Therefore, with regard to such men as these, who go about betraying Christ, making a mock of San Giovanni,* and cheating and flouting their neighbours, it may be said that, neither living nor dead, can we manage to deliver ourselves out of their clutches. For these reasons may God by a lasting miracle give light to the minds of each one of us, so that we may be able clearly to spy out the hidden treachery of these wretches, even as thou, most sagacious Cavalier, hast most excellently done in thine own case.

THE NARRATIVE

PIETRA PULCINA is the name of a village situated in the Valle Beneventana, a place inhabited by a clownish race of people, fitted for the labour of the fields, or the tasks of the dairy and the cattle-shed, rather than for any other kind of traffic or profitable calling. Now in this place there lived, some time ago, a priest who was young, and a very good-looking fellow to boot; and, although all his learning consisted in being able to read a little, nevertheless, by the assistance of Madonna Santa Croce,† the special protector of the ignorant, he was appointed archpriest of the village aforesaid. Though it happened that he was, by a very long way, more fitted to be a feller of trees in the forest‡ than a shepherd of human souls, nevertheless he set himself to the discharge of his new calling in the best fashion he knew how to use, and, over and beyond the fact that in a very short space of time he became the spiritual brother of the greater part of all the men and women in the village aforesaid, it may be recorded that on all needful and prescribed occasions he gave to every one of his parishioners the spiritual sacra-

* St. John the Baptist.

† Probably an allusion to the "Santa Croce" spelling book, the earliest manual for children. This was still used in Italy a few years ago.

‡ Orig., *inversatore di bosco.*

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ments. The end of it was, that this young man, after the manner of those who think it but a trifle to enjoy a bout of amorous sport whenever opportunity offers, cast his eye over a certain young woman of the place, the wife of a gossip of his, and one endowed with extraordinary beauty. Her name was Lisetta, and in a very short time the priest found himself hotly in love with her.

The aforesaid young woman was the wife of a peasant; also a youth, who was called by name Il Veneziano, and he, after having followed the calling of a mercenary foot-soldier in the wars not long past, at last came back to his own country, bringing with him the rewards which peace gives commonly to those who serve for gain; and then, subduing the earth with the mattock and the plough in the sweat of his brow, he passed his life honestly in the company of his fair wife. It chanced, however, that Lisetta very soon discovered how this gossip of hers was enamoured of her, and, recognizing him in his new office and dignity as the first man of the place, she ascribed to him the attributes of the highest station, and often, when communing with herself alone, felt no little pride thereanent: Indeed, she would willingly have given him all he asked for, had it not been that her husband, as one well versed in such affairs, became in a way jealous of her, insomuch that he never missed taking her with him to bear him company whenever he went, according to his wont, to his daily labour in the fields.

Now it happened one day that the young woman fell ill, and had perforce to remain at home in the house while her husband went forth to labour with his oxen. The archpriest, as soon as he got intelligence of this, straightway began to lay his plans for no other end than to make love to his gossip's wife, and, walking past the house where Lisetta dwelt, he called out, "Good day, gossip mine." She, having come to the window all filled with gladness at the sound of his voice, and having given him back a fitting salute, demanded of him whither he was bound at such an early hour. To her the priest, laughing the while, answered in this wise: "I in sooth am come hither this morning, now that your husband is gone afield and you for once left behind at home, to beg of you

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that you will give me the loan of his mare to go as far as the vineyard, for the reason that he himself is so much of a niggard that not only does he refuse to let any man mount her except himself, but scarcely allows another to set eyes upon her save when he may be present." Lisetta, who was very well advised, understood perfectly what sort of mare it was he was alluding to, and made answer to him, smilling as she spoke: "Good gossip, your thoughts have assuredly played you false to-day, forasmuch as you are come hither at a time when, however willing I might be to make you the loan you ask for, I am unable to do so, seeing that the mare has hurt her back in such a way that she may not, on any account, go out of the stable; indeed, this very morning, as soon as it was dawn, my husband wanted to have a ride for his pleasure, but on account of the failing I have just described to you he found that he could in no wise do what he willed."

The archpriest, who understood quite well what thing it was that Lisetta alluded to, then replied: "But this thing indeed is really a stroke of good luck for us, seeing that I cannot imagine that such a chance should have happened at a better time, I being especially well furnished at this present moment with a supply of fodder which I will presently put before the mare; nay, I will take such good care of her that another time you will, I am well assured, be all the more ready to lend her to me." "Alas!" cried the young woman, "you men are all alike, saucy fellows and boasters as you are. I, for my part, have never yet set eyes on a mare which, being ill, was in any way made well again by the boon of a grain of corn." "And why not?" said he; "but now pray to God that He may soon let her be fit for riding, so that there may ensue some actual deeds which shall bear yet stronger witness of the truth of what I say." "Now go your way, and God go with you," said Lisetta. "By the time five or six days shall have passed I hope the mare will again be fit for the saddle, and we will make a trial to see whether it is so." And after they had conversed together some time longer in a similar strain, the priest took his departure and went home.

After a short space of time had elapsed the mare was

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found to be so far restored that she was able to sustain any burden, however heavy, which might be put upon her, and Il Veneziano made such use of her as pleased him. Then the young woman determined in her mind that she would carry out the promise which she had given to the priest, and on this account she remained at home one day alone for some trumped-up reason which she gave to her husband, instead of going to the fields with him. As soon as the archpriest knew what had happened, he betook himself, without losing a moment of time, to the door of the farm where the young woman dwelt, and entered therein without being observed by a single person. There he found the mare all in order, and, as soon as he had with a very few words arranged the stirrups to his liking, he mounted and rode so shrewd a bout, that before he had given over using his spurs he found that he had ridden a good two miles and a half, so that in a very short time he had fared a longer distance than he needed. And if the mare had not chanced to stumble and fall down in the course of the journey, on account of the great speed at which they went, he would with perfect ease have come to the end of the third mile, according to the purpose he had originally formed. And in order that his deeds might not be out of harmony with his words, he showed himself mighty generous of his provender at the end of every mile. Wherefore, with the greatest delectation to himself, he went on his course all through that day without having any notion, when evening at last began to fall, what number of miles he had covered since he set forth, and in this wise they continued the journey they had begun.

Now, when at last the hour had come when Il Veneziano would be returning from his fields, the archpriest went his way in right and proper fashion, having left the mare somewhat wearied, but not yet satiated with fodder, in the stable. But when it came to pass, somewhat later, that Lisetta's husband, either stirred thereto by the vice of jealousy or through having been made acquainted with what had passed, warned her, and forbade her, unless she might wish to meet her death at his hands forthwith, that for the future she should take good care to hold no

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intercourse whatever with the archpriest, the goodwife, calling to mind how vastly more abundant and generous were the favours provided by her good gossip than those of her husband, who forsooth was mightily niggard in this respect, was as one half dead with grief and vexation, and straightway let the archpriest know the turn affairs had taken—news which was to him fully as irksome as it was to her. Then, after many and varied expedients put in practice by them in order to find a secure means of foregathering, they hit at last upon a plan which was of a surety more diverting than dangerous.

By way of putting this project of theirs into execution without farther delay, our good Lisetta, when she was going out of church on a certain Sunday morning, made believe, in the presence of all the people there assembled, that she was possessed by some spirit or other, and straight way began to twist about her hands and her eyes and her mouth in the strangest fashion, howling and crying in such wise that all the people who were there fled from her presence as fast as they could. Now her husband, who indeed loved her more than he loved his own life, as soon as he saw what strange thing had come to pass, was stricken with wellnigh mortal grief, and, weeping bitterly the while, he led her back with him to his house. His grief having by this time in a measure chased away his jealousy, he let summon forthwith his gossip the archpriest, and, shedding abundant tears, he entreated him that he would quickly speak some conjuration against the possessing spirits, and consider what holy prayers he might use in order to compel them to go forth from his wife. The archpriest, coming forward with an air of the deepest gravity, and beginning his rite of exorcism with the accustomed forms, thereupon demanded to know of the spirit whom he might be. To this question the young woman, according to the pact between the two, made answer in these words: "I am the spirit of the father of this poor young woman, and am condemned to go wandering wretchedly about this world for the space of ten years."

Il Veneziano, when he heard these words, straightway believed it was his father-in-law who spoke, and addressing him, he said, with much weeping and tears: "Alas! I

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beseech you, for God's sake, that you will come forth from where you are, and that you will no longer torment your own daughter." Then the spirit in answer spake thus: "In a few days, indeed, I will go hence; but I tell you plainly that I will then take up my abode in your own body, where I shall remain all the residue of the time during which, as I told you, I am condemned to purge away my sins. This I will do because you yourself were glad when I died."

Poor Veneziano, as soon as he heard these terrible tidings, took no farther concern as to the trouble which at present molested his wife, being entirely occupied with the woes which threatened his own person in the future; wherefore he cried out, altogether overcome by his fears: "Ah, wretch that I am, is there indeed to be found no cure for my troubles? Cannot this doom, which has been pronounced against me, be revoked either by the way of almsgiving or by the offering of some other possessions of mine?" "Yes, indeed," replied the spirit; "that is, if you are inclined thereto." Then said Il Veneziano: "What do you mean by talking of my inclination? Surely I would sell everything I have, down to my jackass." To this the spirit made answer: "Your task then will be to go on a pilgrimage of forty days, and to visit forty churches, at every one of which you shall cause to be said a mass for the remission of my sins; and you shall furthermore leave due directions to the archpriest, your good gossip, against whom you have in very wicked wise taken up a jealous suspicion, that in the meantime he shall say the same number of masses in this place, and that he shall come hither every day and recite the canonical hours in the hearing of your wife, for the reason that his prayers are much more acceptable in the presence of God, he being so much more a righteous man, and one full of the gifts of the spirit. Therefore, from this time forth, I charge you that you show towards him the highest trust and devotion, forasmuch as by the virtue of his prayers I have good hope that you will not only receive the gift of grace, but that God will always in the future give rich increase to your flocks and your herds."

Il Veneziano, hearing that after all there was to be

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found a remedy for the terrible misfortune which he, without the least doubt or suspicion, believed had been prepared for him, made answer without hesitation that he would at once let everything be duly carried out. Then addressing himself at once to his reverend gossip, he besought him that he would without fail let ensue all the above-named directions, promising at the same time to sell the finest pig he possessed for the forwarding thereof. Then, without further tarrying, he set forth on his journey.

The archpriest, who all this time had feigned to let fall tears from his eyes, while he was in truth laughing inwardly, took up forthwith the charge which had thus been laid upon him by his gossip, and, having resumed possession of the goodwife and of what few goods she had about her, it may be held for certain that, before the husband made his way back from the devout pilgrimage he had undertaken, it was necessary, in order to drive out from the afflicted body of the young woman the evil spirit aforesaid, to lay a whole hundred of blessed ones, which work these two accomplished with the greatest pleasure and delight to themselves. And thus at one and the same time the masses—which in sooth were never begun—were finished;* Il Veneziano returned, having accomplished his pilgrimage; Lisetta was freed from her trouble; and the spirit expelled by the archpriest. For the future Il Veneziano ever bore himself most complaisantly towards his reverend gossip, so that never again from this time forward was he in any way jealous of his pretty wife. And she, forsooth, in the season of her affliction, had laid bare, after the fashion which spirits are accustomed to use, all the secrets both as to men and as to women which had given her annoyance, telling such secrets after the similitude of certain others which the archpriest had more than once imparted to her during the practice of confession, thus following the infamous usage and damnable habit of this most wicked generation.

* Orig., *le non cominciate messe furono finite*—an Italian bull.

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MASUCCIO

IN sooth the things which I have set before you in this last novel of mine are mightily diverting, and such as may not be passed over without much laughter. Amongst other matters there is the stumbling of the mare which prevented the worthy horseman from coming to the end of that third mile—a sort of journeying which may well seem hard of belief to all those who have not had experience of the same. But, the humour notwithstanding, we may and we must ever regard as things to be held in the deepest hatred that most malignant nature and that nefarious way of life of this village archpriest, and of the greater part of the whole body of the clergy. For they treat as a thing of no account the most holy sacrament of baptism, and make no more difficulty about breaking through and violating the same, or in laying bare the secrets confided to them in the sacred practice of confession, than they would feel over the most trifling mistake committed during the repetition of any of the offices of religion. And when they make confession one to another concerning any of these execrable vices aforesaid, or even of worse sins (if, indeed, worse can be committed), for which they richly merit the penalty of perpetual imprisonment, or even the painful and horrible death of burning by fire, they will impose upon each other such a trifling penance as a single paternoster, just as if the offence had been no worse than spitting in church. But if by chance there should fall into their clutches any layman charged with offences similar to the above-named, then, besides raising a terrible storm about his head, they would launch condemnation against him as a heretic, and would on no account consent to grant him absolution unless he should first hand over to them divers of the possessions of Madonna Santa Croce. That these words of mine are the truth I will show you in my tenth novel, which I will let follow forthwith (the last, moreover, which shall deal with the doings of this folk), how an old confessing priest —not in any village or rude country place, where his igno-

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rance might in a way have been his excuse, but in the mighty city of Rome itself, and in the very centre of Saint Peter's—made, with the utmost wickedness and cunning, a market of the joys of Paradise to whatsoever persons might be willing to purchase the same, just as if they had been mere chattels belonging to himself. This thing was told to me as a true fact by a man whose word is worthy of all credit.

THE END OF THE NINTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Tenth

ARGUMENT

FRA ANTONIO DE SAN MARCELLO IN THE COURSE OF HEARING CONFESSIONS SELLS THE GIFT OF PARADISE, AND ACCUMULATES VAST SUMS OF MONEY BY THIS PRACTICE. TWO MEN OF FERRARA CONTRIVE, BY PUTTING UPON HIM A MOST SUBTLE CHEAT, TO SELL HIM A FALSE JEWEL. WHEN HE COMES TO KNOW OF THE FRAUD, HE DIES WRETCHEDLY, ALMOST MADDENED BY THIS TROUBLE.

TO THE NOBLE AND HIGH-BORN MESSER FRANCESCO ARCELLA*

EXORDIUM

MY most righteous Arcella, if we mortals would only well and carefully consider the full extent of the sublimity and immensity of the mercy and the abundant grace of the most high God towards the generations of men, we should have it clearly made known to us how, from the very first moments of our procreation, He did not deem it enough merely to make us after His own image and similar to Himself; but, in addition to this, desired to confer upon us full domination over sea and land, hills and plains, and to make all generations of beasts, which reason not, to be our tractable subjects and useful for our being. And notwithstanding that our first parents, by their foolhardy greed, sought to bring upon themselves, and upon all those who should come after them, inevitable and eternal death, God, in order to demonstrate to us in all His deeds His abundant liberality and sublime love, deigned to send down to us His only Son, in His desire to redeem us from condemnation, and

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to Messer Francesco Lavanguolo.

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to let this Blessed One suffer a death of most bitter pain upon the wood of the cross, thus opening to us straightway the closed doors of Paradise. And over and beyond all this, so as to leave undone naught by which He might make clear to us all how true was the kindly affection He felt towards us in His benignant love, He left to comfort us here on earth, when He Himself willed to return to the Father whence He came, that most glorious bishop Saint Peter, his worthy successor, conferring upon him ample powers which should afterwards go down for ever to all the sacerdotal clergy as the workers of His will, whereby they might always be able to give us our share in the true city of Paradise, at whatever time we might call upon them for the same.

But one thing there is which must needs cause us the greatest astonishment when we regard it, to wit, the infinite patience which God the Creator of all shows in allowing still to live upon earth certain of these aforesaid agents of His holy mysteries, men who by this same authority sell the reward of Paradise in their office as confessors, as if it were a thing belonging to themselves, to others who look upon it as a chattel to be bought and sold. According to the means of the would-be buyer, and the sum of money he may be willing to spend, these men will pretend to give away or to withhold a higher or a lower place round about the throne of the most high God, never considering in their dealings the difference which there may be between one man and another—whether he may be a homicide, and of most wicked life, and given to every vice, or one of seemly carriage, and honoured by all, on account of his good and decent way of living. All they require is that their greedy avaricious hands should be abundantly salved with coin.* And were it not for the fact that I have made up my mind to molest these

* Baptista Mantuanus, who is cited by Bayle to illustrate the vices of Sixtus IV., writes in his poem, "De Calamitatibus Temporum":

"Venalia nobis
Templa, sacerdotes, altaria, sacra, coronæ
Ignes, terra, preces, cœlum est venale, Deusque."

Under Innocent VIII., his successor, the system of spiritual corruption was farther elaborated by the establishment at Rome

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wretches no more by the pricks of my pen, I would here bring before you so many instances well worthy of belief from times past, and, in addition to these, so many true witnesses as to their doings in these days, that you yourself, and many others besides, would wonder beyond measure how it is that divine justice does not straightway consent to let all such men be blasted by lightning, and sent down to the lowest centre of the abyss. Nevertheless, I will set before you one instance, showing you what manner of deed was wrought by a certain old priest in order to gather together money, and how he, after having sold Paradise to an enormous number of innocent Christian people, and thereby opened to them the gates thereof,* found these same gates, according to his deserts, shut in his face when the time came for him to depart from this life.

THE NARRATIVE

IN the days of Pope Eugenius IV.,† that most worthy prince of the Christian state, there lived in Rome a certain priest full of years, a good Catholic, reputed to be a man of pure and holy life, who was called by name Fra Antonio de San Marcello, and was a member of the Order of the Servites.‡ For many years past he had exercised his office amongst the other penitentiary priests

of a bank for the sale of pardons, and every sin had its price. In the chronicle of Infessura there is a story of the Vice-Chancellor, who, being asked why criminals were allowed to pay instead of suffering for their misdeeds, replied, "God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should pay and live.

* It is somewhat remarkable that Masuccio should allow a corrupt sale of spiritual privileges to be valid for its purpose.

† Formerly Cardinal Condolmieri. He succeeded Martin V. in 1431. He was a Celestine monk, and a man of hard and stubborn character. His first act as pope was to attack and despoil the Colonnas, the kinsfolk of his predecessor. The Cardinal Prospero and Antonio, Prince of Salerno, were the chief victims. He summoned the Council of Basel for the reform of the clergy, and the Councils of Ferrara and Florence for the re-union of the Eastern and Western Churches. He died in 1447.

‡ The Servites were founded in 1233 by an association of Florentine citizens. They adopted the Augustinian rule, with

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who served the confessionals at St. Peter's, and he always continued the practice of his calling without putting on a stern and wrathful face, as is the custom of some. He, on the other hand, by his kindly greetings and gentle manners, persuaded all the penitents to come to him to confess their sins; for, as surely as water will extinguish a burning fire, so holy almsgiving, done through the means of sincere confession, will purge away sin both as regards this world and the next as well. Indeed, if by chance there should have gone to him any penitent who had been guilty of all the misdoings and unpardonable crimes which lie within the possibilities of the sinful spirit of man, if only this sinner should have filled his hand full of anything beside wind, the friar straightway brought the penitent face to face with Saint John the Baptist.*

And thus, while the friar went on for many years heaping up this enormous gain, and being held and reputed by all those who knew him to be little short of a saint, it came to pass that the greater part of those coming from foreign lands, and of the Italians as well, would under no circumstances let themselves be shriven by any other than he, thus filling his pockets every day with various sums of money. Although he had by such practices as these heaped together many thousands of florins, and was often wont, with a hypocritical look upon his face, to make some pretence of adding to the buildings of his monastery, still, so rare and so insignificant were the sums he gave away, that, compared with the huge revenues he enjoyed, they stood for nothing more than the taking of a beakerful of water out of the Tiber.†

certain variations. They received the sanction of the Pope in 1255, and in 1487 Innocent VIII. put them on a level with the other mendicant orders.

* Orig., *pur che la mano d' altro che di vento gonfiata li avesse, di botto dirimpetto a San Giovanni Battista il collocava.* The first of these allusions is a parallel to the other Italian saying: *stare colle mani piene di mosche.* The reference to St. John the Baptist is probably a suggestion of bribery money, as in Florence coins were struck bearing the image of the saint, the patron of the city.

† Orig., *altro non era che un bicchiero d'acqua di Tevere aver tolto.*

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Wherefore, after a certain time had elapsed, there arrived in Rome from Ferrara two youths, the one named Ludovico and the other Biasio, who, as is the practice of men of their sort, were accustomed to travel without ceasing through the world from one place to another, carrying with them false money and counterfeit jewels, and many other artful frauds, for the beguiling of all those people who might be to the leeward of them.* Before long these two received intelligence of the great riches of Fra Antonio, and likewise how he was more avaricious than any other old priest in the place—how the only reason why he still went on taking his seat in that penitentiary of his arose from his intense passion of greed. And as for the seat itself, seeing that he continually made therein a trade and barter of places in Paradise, it might have been called more appropriately a publican's counter. Over and beyond this, it came to their knowledge how the good friar maintained a close intercourse and commerce with certain changers of money—men well versed in every language, and such as trouble themselves with the practice of no other calling than to change the money of their own country, sitting thus always in front of St. Peter's for the convenience of those strangers who nowadays come from the other side of the mountains. The two Ferrarese found out that not only did Fra Antonio seek the services of these men for the exchange of the various moneys he received into Italian coin, so that he might the better hoard them up, but that he also went to them for advice with regard to certain gems which, from time to time, came into his hands as offerings.

Wherefore, after they had got possession of minute information as to his ways and dealings, they took counsel together as to how they might best add Fra Antonio to the number of those whom they had cozened. For this reason Biasio, being well skilled in the language of Castile, pretended to be a Spanish money-changer, and, having hung a money-changer's tray about his neck, took up his station early one morning with his stock of coins amongst the others of his calling in front of St. Peter's. Then, whenever Fra Antonio might happen to pass either into or out of

* Orig., *che gionger si poteano sotto vento.*

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the church, Biasio with a merry face would salute him by taking off his cap. For several days he continued to use this behaviour towards the priest, who, on his part, began to wish to know more of the man who greeted him so courteously; so one day he called to the fellow in good-humoured wise, and bade him tell straightway what was his name and from what country he came. Biasio, as soon as he perceived how things were going, was over-joyed thereanent, forasmuch as it seemed to him that the fish was at last beginning to scent the bait; wherefore in cunning fashion he thus made answer to Fra Antonio: "Messere, my name is Diego de Medina, and I hold myself at your pleasure. I am come hither forsooth, not so much to ply the trade of a money-changer, as to purchase any fine precious stones, either set or unset, which may fall into my hands, seeing that of such wares as these, I, by God's mercy, am a very skilful judge, through having lived for a good portion of my life in Scotland, where I managed to master a number of secrets connected with the jeweller's art. But in any case, my father, I am altogether at your disposition, and, if there should come into your hands any of the money of my country, I am prepared to assist you in the changing thereof for a very small profit. I will do this both on account of the respect I have for your cloth, and on account of the affection I have towards you in this acquaintance of ours, so recent and to me so very dear."

The friar, when he perceived how becoming was the speech of this man, and when he furthermore ascertained how great was his skill and knowledge as a lapidary, was in no small measure pleased with him; wherefore, reckoning that he had met with a great stroke of luck in finding such a friend, made answer to him in these words, his face beaming with joy the while: "Now see, my Diego, you must know that all good and true love is reciprocal. On this account, seeing that I am held here to be a man of particular authority, and one to whom, peradventure, more penitents come than to any other confessor of this church, I beg you, if such a request may not seem irksome to you, that, should any man of your nation, or, indeed, of any other, come before you, you will send him to me.

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And anyone coming to me in such wise, I will hold to be specially recommended on account of the love I bear to you; and, besides this, I myself will do as much or even more on your behalf if ever you should require it." And in this manner, after they had mutually thanked one another, and had determined to treat one another exactly as if they were father and son, each one went about his own business.

Now Ludovico, in furtherance of the scheme devised between him and Biasio, had put on the disguise of a Provencal sailor who had fled from the galleys, and was now spending his time in going about St. Peter's, begging from this one and from that. Indeed, he knew so well how to play the part of a cozening knave, that, putting on one side the business he had chiefly in view, he picked up* from almost everyone he met a great quantity of alms, what though the sums themselves were but trifles. Meantime, as he went rambling about the church he did not fail to keep his eye fixed constantly on the pennant,† and when at a certain moment he perceived that Fra Antonio was unencumbered by any duty at the confessional, he humbly crept towards him with loitering steps, and besought him that of his goodness he would deign to listen for a few moments.

The good friar in sooth had a purse for every man's money, and although, judging by appearances, he deemed the fellow before him to be mightily poor, he nevertheless turned towards him, and, having made him kneel down at his feet, he signed over him the sign of the holy cross; whereupon Ludovico addressed him in the following words: "My father, although my sins are very great and heinous, I have not been moved to come to you so much to unburden myself of these, as to reveal to you a great secret which I would sooner commit to your keeping than to the keeping of any man in the world, for I clearly perceive that you are endowed with every virtue, and devoted to the service of God. I know not what spirit it may be within me which is urging me, either by my own good luck or by the fortune in store for you, to do this thing. I

* Orig., *arravogliava*—Neapolitan dialect.

† Orig., *con l'occhio sempre al pennello.*

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only know that I feel myself compelled to make it known to you alone. But there is one favour I ask and implore of you, by the true God and by the holy sacrament of confession, and this is that it may please you to keep my secret close. Of the necessity of this request of mine, you, I am well assured, will be convinced forthwith when you shall have heard the nature thereof."

Fra Antonio, who comprehended clearly enough from the ring of the words that there was some gain to be made out of the fellow before him, immediately turned towards him, and, having made mental appraisement of his value, he thus addressed him in benignant wise: "My son, it was surely the good counsel of your soul which persuaded you to trust to my keeping this thing you mention. Still, I will not refrain from reminding you that you may lay bare before me this, and any other secret matter you may have, without any doubt or suspicion; for you must know that when you speak your confession will be made to God and not to me. And no form of death, let it be ever so shameful—to say nothing of the eternal damnation which would follow the same—would be held to be an adequate punishment in this world for the man who would be base enough to reveal the secrets told to him in holy confession."

Ludovico, who in sooth was a very cunning knave, here began to let fall plentiful tears, saying the while, "Messere, I believe all that you say, but still the fact remains that the matter in question must needs prove to be a mighty dangerous one as far as I am concerned, and that I am troubled with many doubts as to whether it can ever be brought to pass without letting fall dishonour upon me, or even putting me in danger of my life." On the other hand, the friar, whose greed was now keenly aroused, went on without pause to bring into play all his cunning, and persuaded Ludovico as best he could, with all sorts of cogent arguments, to stand in no doubt in a case of conscience. When Ludovico, with just as great cunning on his part, had kept back the secret from the friar for a considerable time, and when he saw at last how keen the old man's curiosity was to have knowledge of the same, he began to tell a story, in very timid fashion,as to how

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he had been detained by force on board a Catalonian galley for a long time, setting forth everything in due order, and ending by confessing how he had at the present time concealed on his person a carbuncle stone of immense value, which jewel he himself, while on board of the galley aforesaid, had stolen from the dead body of one of his comrades, a Greek, who had died of fever, and how he alone, of all the people on board the galley, knew that the Greek was wont to keep sewn up in the bosom of his coat this precious jewel, which he and a certain German had very cunningly stolen, together with certain other articles of great value, out of the treasury of St. Mark. Ludovico next went on to tell how by their evil fortune they had been made prisoners by this said galley, and how, the ship having been wrecked through missing sight of the lighthouse, he and divers others had made good their escape therefrom, and by the help of God had managed to find their way to Rome.

Now when Ludovico had brought to an end this well-planned discourse of his, he added, weeping as he spoke, "My father, I know well enough that if I carry about me this precious jewel on such a long journey as I needs must make to reach my home from this place, it may very easily come to pass that, by reason of this stone, I may some day be taken and hanged by the neck. Wherefore I would not mind parting with it for a sum much less than its just value. And because, as you yourself must see, that God has apparently sent His spirit upon me in such wise that I have been led straight to you, and because peradventure He may have ordained, on account of those many good works of yours of which I hear the fame, that so great a treasure as this carbuncle of mine should sooner belong to you than to any other man, I implore you, for all the reasons aforesaid, that you will do your best to let this business of mine come to an issue in such manner that no scandal of any kind may arise thereanent. I will let you see the jewel I have told you of, and, if it should chance to please you, you shall give me therefor just as much money as will suffice, when I shall have returned to my home, duly to bestow my three daughters in marriage; for I have this very day heard intelligence of them, letting me know that

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they are still alive, but reduced to a state of extreme misery and want. I ask you to give me so much and nothing more in exchange for my precious gem."

Fra Antonio, when he had heard the end of this skilfully concocted story, not only gave full credit thereto, but was so much delighted with the news that it seemed as if he would jump out of his skin for joy, and, after he had given his promise, with many flowery speeches, to keep secret whatever might be told to him, he asked Ludovico to let him see the gem in question. The fellow still pretended to be in a timid and reluctant mood, but, after the friar had gone on for some time urging his request, he drew out at last from his breast, feigning to be shaking with fear the while, a piece of crystal set in fine gold with a bit of ruby-coloured foil at the back thereof, the whole thing being arranged in such masterly wise that it seemed of a truth to be a carbuncle of the finest. From its size and from its beauty it was indeed a marvellous thing to the eye, and it was so well draped in cloth of taffetas, and so cunningly disposed, that every passer-by looking at it would have taken it for real, and no one but a lapidary would have detected the underlying fraud. Then Ludovico, taking the stone in one hand and carefully shading it with the other, cast a glance around him, and finally displayed his gem to the gaze of the greedy and rapacious wolf before him.

Fra Antonio,as soon as he had looked at it, was altogether confused and amazed at the sight thereof, for indeed it seemed to him as if it must be of even greater value than he had at first thought possible, and it straightway occurred to him that in this matter it would be well for him to seek the counsel of his Castilian friend; wherefore, turning to Ludovico, he said, "In truth the gem seems to be a very fine one; nevertheless, it may happen that your companion told you a falsehood. But, that there may be no doubt in the affair, I will, if it pleases you, show it privately to a friend of mine who has great skill as a lapidary and, if it should veritably prove to be what it is in outward seeming, I will give you not only what you ask for it, but as much as lies in my power to disburse."

To this speech Ludovico replied: "No, you must not do this thing, for it may happen that I shall be thereby

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condemned to suffer as a thief." Then the friar answered: "Of a truth you need have no doubts on this score, for I give you my promise that I will not leave the church, but only go as far as the great door, where there is, as I know well, a certain Castilian, an eminent lapidary, a very worthy person, and my son in the spirit to boot. To him I would wish to show the gem, using the greatest caution over the business, and when he shall have inspected it I will come back to you." To this Ludovico replied, by way of answer: "Alas! alas! it seems certain to me that you will be the death of me, and that this is my last day of life. Indeed, I would never grant your request were I not forced thereto. But, at the same time, if I grant it, I beg and warn you to take good care how you trust Spaniards, seeing that they are men to whom little faith is due." The friar replied: "Ah! leave the care of this to me, for, were he to prove the greatest villain the world holds, he would not get the better of me, forasmuch as he loves me as well as he does his own self."

Thus, leaving Ludovico in the church, Fra Antonio hurried away to the place where Diego was awaiting his coming with no small longing. As soon as the rogue saw him, he greeted him with his accustomed salute, which the friar duly returned, and then the latter, having taken Diego aside somewhat, displayed to him the precious gem, begging him at the same time that he would, for the sake of the love he had for him, tell him truly what might be the value thereof. As soon as Diego saw the stone he began to feign to be overcome with the greatest astonishment, and then, with a smile, he said: "Messere, is it possible that you want to make a gull of me, seeing that this is assuredly the Pope's own carbuncle?" The friar, overjoyed at these words, then said: "Do not trouble youself over the matter, but simply tell me what, according to your judgment, might be the value of it." Whereupon Diego, still laughing in his sleeve, replied: "What need is there for me to do this, since you know the gem better than I do. But I see how the thing stands: you are anxious to put my skill to the test; and, since it pleases you that it should be so, I am well content. So, without keeping you any longer waiting, I will tell you that no one in the world

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save the Pope or the Venetians could pay for this gem the price which it is really worth." The friar replied: "By the love that you have for me in your soul, I beg you to tell me what might be the value of it." "Alas!" said Diego, "although at this present time gems are of very small value,* I, poor as I am, would nevertheless rather be the owner of this carbuncle than of thirty thousand ducats." And after gazing upon the stone once more he kissed it, saying: "Blessed be the earth which produced thee!" Then, when he had restored the carbuncle to the friar, he went on: "But tell me, by your faith, does this gem indeed belong to the Pope?" "It does indeed," the friar answered; "but I must tell you that it is absolutely necessary this thing should be kept a secret, forasmuch as His Holiness does not wish that anyone should cast eyes upon it until it shall be set in his mitre, and I am now about to have it inlaid therein."

When he had thus spoken Fra Antonio took his leave, and, rejoicing in his heart at what he had heard, returned to Ludovio, and said to him: "My son, the gem is in sooth a very fine one; still it is not of such great value as you deem. Nevertheless, I will take it, and let it be set in a crucifix for our church. How much, therefore, have you determined in your mind to ask for it?" Ludovico answered: "Ah! do not talk in this fashion. I indeed know quite well what the thing is worth, and if I could carry it away with me without putting my life in peril thereby, I should assuredly become one of the richest men in the world. But I have determined rather to bestow it safely in some private place here, than to take it away with me and to sell it at a risk in other parts. To get me some aid in this my extreme need I therefore place myself entirely in your hands and beg you that you will act towards me in such wise as God and your conscience may inspire you, especially as you stand in need of the gem for the use of your church." The friar answered: "May you be blessed, my son! but, seeing that we poor priests have no other source of income than the alms which are bestowed upon us by devout persons, and seeing likewise that you yourself are a poor man, it will be necessary that we should

* Orig., *ancor che oggi le gioie sieno a terra.*

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use some sort of discretion in our dealings one with another. And in order that you may have some experience as to how things are with me, I will tell you that I can now at this present time hand over to you two hundred ducats; and, if it should happen that at some future time you should come back to this place, I will not fail to make you a partaker in whatever grace God may have sent to me in the meantime."

Ludovico, when he listened to this speech, began to weep afresh, and cried: "Alas, alas! Messere, you call yourself a man of God, and yet you have the conscience to mention so small a sum. May it never be the will of God that I should fall into such an oversight as this!" Then said the friar in answer: "Now do not distress yourself, my good man, and weep in this fashion without reason, but tell me plainly what sum you want for your jewel." "What do I want for it?" cried Ludovico. "I trow that if I should let you have it for a thousand ducats I should be bestowing a greater benefaction upon your church than all those who have raised it up from the laying of the first stone." Fra Antonio, who on one side was moved by the vilest avarice, and on the other by greedy desire to be the possessor of this most magnificent gem, began to bear up to the wind, and Ludovico was fain to strike his sails somewhat;* so that at last, after a long bout of haggling, they both stopped half-way—that is, they agreed the price should be five hundred ducats.

Thereupon they took their way together towards San Marco, and Fra Antonio, as soon as he had come into his chamber, put the fine carbuncle safely away in a casket, and gave Ludovico in exchange for the same five hundred ducats in fine gold. Having received these and a benediction as well, Ludovico, with the friars' assistance, straightway sewed the money up in his coat, and this done, he departed, making his way swifter than the wind towards St. Peter's. When he arrived there he gave a signal to his companion, who was awaiting his coming, doubting

* Orig., *Frate Antonio che da un canto la pessima avaritia, e da l' altro la gulosita de la ricchissima gioia lo stimolava, de l'orza a montare incominciato, e Ludovico a calare in poppa.* Masuccio keeps up the nautical metaphor throughout this story.

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somewhat the while. They met later on at a certain place which had already been settled between them; and now that they have set their sails to the wind, I beg you, good Fra Antonio, to find them if you can.

The friar, as soon as the bargain was completed, found himself mightily well content therewith, deeming that this purchase of his had made a very rich man of him. Furthermore, he was minded to sell the aforesaid jewel into the service of our Lord by the help of a certain lapidary, who was his dearest friend and also his gossip. Therefore, having sent for this man and bade him come straightway, he showed him this magnificent stone, using no little parade and ceremony the while, and thus addressed him: "What think you of this, my good gossip? have I not made a fine purchase, although I am naught but a friar?" As soon as the gossip saw the stone, he began to laugh, and when the friar perceived this he demanded, albeit he himself was still smiling, "What are you laughing at?" To him the lapidary answered, "I laugh in considering the multitudinous and multiform cheats which men versed in the world's ways contrive for the beguiling of those who are gifted with little forethought, and at the same time I declare that there are very few men who would not have known this stone to be a false one." "How!" cried the friar; "is not this stone a good one? What may its value be? Examine it well and narrowly, for the love of God." The gossip made answer to him: "I have already examined it, and I now tell you for certain that there is naught of value about it save the gold in which it is set, and that would not amount to more than ten ducats at most; and, in order that you may yourself be assured of this, I will make it clear to you forthwith." Then, having taken in hand a knife, he dexterously wrenched the stone out of the setting therewith, and took away the foil which was there, and straightway let Fra Antonio see that the stone was perfectly clear crystal, which appeared in the rays of the sun as something little better than a lighted candle.

When the friar fully realized the trick, it seemed to him as if the heavens were falling on his head, and that the solid earth were being rapt from beneath his feet. Then,

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in his savage fury and overwhelming grief, he raised his hands and began to lacerate his face with his nails, which were old and crooked. His gossip marvelled greatly at what he saw, and spake thus to him: "What ails you, my good gossip?" "Alas! my son," Fra Antonio replied, "I am a dead man, for I have paid for that thing there a price of five hundred golden ducats. But, for God's sake, give me your company as far as St, Peter's, where I trow we may find a certain Castilian money-changing thief who assured that the stone was genuine. Of a surety he must be in fraudulent league with the one who sold it to me." The gossip made a mock of this scheme; nevertheless, to give the friar satisfaction, they took to horse, and spent the whole of that day in searching for Mary all over Rome;* and in the end, when they failed to find her, the good friar made his way back to his home sad and grieving amain: Then he took to his bed, and, through lamentations and scourging himself, and beating his head against the wall, he brought himself into such a state of fever, that, without taking any heed to provide for the reception of the blessed sacrament, he passed away from this life in the course of a very few days.

In this wise, therefore, the great sums of money heaped up by him in making a barter of the celestial home, proved —most justly, be it said—in the end to be the cause which operated most powerfully in procuring his eternal exile therefrom. Indeed, at this last setting forth of his he was not able to carry away with him coin enough to satisfy the claims of Charon—that dread steersman—in order that he might make the passage from the river's brink to the city of Dis. From which voyage may God deliver me and every other faithful Christian man! Amen.

* Orig., *e tutto il di cercata Maria per Roma ne finalmente trovatala*, a saying equivalent to the English "To look for a needle in a haystack."

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SO numerous are the hidden and secret tricks and the fraudulent wiles which these men who wear the garb of religion are wont every day to put upon ill-fated laymen, that there is no need to marvel if they themselves should now and again be cheated likewise in artful and ingenious fashion by certain others no less wary. Indeed, so little are they accustomed to be duped themselves, that they get into the way of presuming overmuch, and lose restraint over themselves in the matter of knowledge, holding it to be a question beyond dispute that no man could ever have the will or the power to put a cheat upon them. Wherefore, if it should happen at any time that one of them should fall into the snare which has been set for him by a layman, he will suffer so much bitter grief thereanent that he will be like to fall a victim to death, and be bereft of all hope—according to the instance set forth in the foregoing novel.

For the reason that I have fully determined to write no more of the doings of this perverse and wicked generation (although, indeed, I have not said half enough about them), and for the future to put the bar of silence upon my lips and to molest them no more, I find that I must needs leave unnoticed an enormous mass of their secret doings, such as could only by the rarest chance come to the knowledge of laymen. Nor will I enlarge, however much my pen may lead me on thereto, upon the deadly and cruel enmities and the depraved jealousies which exist, not only between one form of religion and another, but between the inmates of the self-same convent, or concerning those, just as great, which prevail in the courts of the great princes of the Church. And we can say nothing worse of them than to mark down how they seduce certain besotted laymen to take up their quarrels, so that about the tribunals and in the piazzas these latter contend publicly over the same, the one becoming a partisan of the Franciscans, and the other of the Dominicans, besides causing a thousand other beastlinesses concerning which I will be here silent. Wherefore, leaving them

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henceforth in full possession, without any hindrance whatsoever, of the many hundred years they have enjoyed, we will direct the course of our pleasant travel into other parts, and let him who may in the future desire to follow up the search as to their conversation and habits, continue the same for himself, and bear the burden of the pursuit. This one thing, however, I will declare and firmly maintain, that all those deeds of theirs which I have set forth in the past ten novels, and in other places, have in no wise been recorded with the intention of wounding those priests and friars who duly observe to the full the approved and holy rules laid upon them—men who, although it happens that they are few in number, and on this account difficult to be judged by us, are without doubt the light and the sustenance both of our faith and of the Christian religion. And if we come to consider the matter with care, there will be found no cause for marvelling that in such a vast multitude very many wicked and vicious men should exist; seeing that, although it chanced that the great and omnipotent God created in the first instance the whole of the angelic choir good and perfect, no small wickedness was afterwards found even amongst the most exalted ones thereof, so that they were hurled down from heaven by divine justice into the nethermost centre of the pit. And, also, what shall be said of Christ, our true and only Redeemer, who came to take upon Him our human flesh on account of the sins of our first parents? Was there not found amongst the small flock which He Himself had chosen that most wicked traitor, Judas, who sold Him for a price into the hands of the perfidious Jews? But in these instances neither the sin of the angels nor that of Judas prevailed in any way to stain the righteousness of those who remained faithful. By the aforesaid arguments we may in truth come to the conclusion that the monstrous vices of those priests who are wicked hypocrites can in no wise wound or offend the virtues and perfections of those who are righteous; nay, rather, the more egregious the exhibition made of the sins of the wicked, the brighter will be the glory with which the integrity of the just will shine. Forasmuch as a black crow, when placed beside a

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white dove, will only serve to enhance the purity of the dove's plumage, so in like manner the detestable doings and the manifest ill deeds wrought by these iniquitous wretches against the majesty of the eternal God will without ceasing exhibit the worth and beauty of the righteous life.

But because in these latter days it is no easy matter to distinguish the good from the bad, who, as I have already said, transform themselves from pastors into wolves wrapped round with the raiment of the gentle lamb, I will continue instant in my chiding of them until I make an end of my reproofs against them altogether, at the same time declaring that it would be more convenient and advantageous if we could contrive to live without these scandals, and that it would be well if their officers —who should naturally be the best judges of the coin they let circulate—were to mark them all with some strange and novel stamp, so that at a first glance it would be an easy matter for each one of us to recognize the counterfeits as branded traitors.* But seeing that such a matter would have to be proposed in their general chapters, I, having many other things to attend to, will leave the world as I found it. Wherefore, having brought this first part of my book to a happy end, we will, with the permission of the Creator and the good pleasure of my listeners, pass on to the second.

* Orig., *come signati giudei fossero.*

HERE ENDS THE FIRST PART.

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PART THE SECOND

Prologue

HERE BEGINS AUSPICIOUSLY THE SECOND PART OF THE NOVELLINO, IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND TEN OTHER NOVELS SETTING FORTH, WITHOUT OFFENCE TO ANYONE, THE HISTORIES OF DIVERS FLOUTS AND SCATHES PUT UPON JEALOUS MEN, TOGETHER WITH MANY OTHER DELIGHTSOME ADVENTURES, IN SUCH ORDER AS WILL BE FOUND BELOW.

NOW indeed I have at last in my defenceless bark come out from amongst the dreadful waves and the raging winds which have vexed it during the narration of the nefarious and unbounded crimes told in the foregoing stories—not indeed without bodily hurt and much weariness of spirit—and have steered myself into the longed-for harbour of safety, there to relax my tired bones and worn-out limbs. Having repaired my rent sails and set in order all the other tackle and rigging of my ship, having taken heed that the season has put on a new aspect, and that the sea, now calmed down, will allow me under the fresh breath of the gentle zephyr to plough its depths in peace, having marked likewise that all the planets and the fair seeming of the skies show themselves friendly and favourable to my emprise, it seems that I ought straightway to direct the course of my bark into these joyous and delightful regions, giving my sails to the wind while this prosperous calm prevails. Then, having entered into these charming and gracious parts, I will gladden my hearers with pleasant and dainty discourse, and make myself an occasion for mirth and gratification to them. For their consideration—and before this benign star of mine shall have come to its appointed end and ceased to let shine the light under which I have begun this work—I will now set down ten other novels, which

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will form the second part of my Novellino. In these I purpose to tell divers other pleasurable jests, set forth in a strain which ought to give offence to no man. And my manner of procedure will be to intermingle the stories in such wise that the one to follow shall depend on the one just told. Wherefore in the beginning—and I do this not without good cause—I will deal in a due and fitting manner with the vicious infirmity of jealousy, and the poisonous results issuing therefrom, a subject which will be set forth after a droll fashion in the first novel, dedicated by me to the most illustrious lord, Don Federico of Aragon.

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Novel the Eleventh

ARGUMENT

JOANNI TORNESE, BY REASON OF HIS JEALOUSY, CAUSES HIS WIFE TO DISGUISE HERSELF IN MAN'S ATTIRE WHENEVER SHE GOES ABROAD WITH HIM; BUT A CERTAIN CAVALIER, HER LOVER, ENJOYS HER IN THE PRESENCE OF A FRIEND OF THE HUSBAND, WHO IN A STATE OF FRENZY TAKES HIS WIFE HOME AFTERWARDS: THE DOINGS OF THE WIFE ARE NOISED ABROAD, AND JOANNI DIES OF VEXATION, WHEREUPON THE WIFE AGAIN MARRIES AND LEADS A MERRY LIFE.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE, DON FEDERICO D'ARAGONA, THE SECOND SON OF THE KING.*

EXORDIUM

MY most goodly prince, although jealousy has been described by many of our poets as a kind of amorous passion brought into being by the soft and gentle flames of love which has become somewhat excessive, nevertheless, on account of the untoward effects which arise therefrom, this distemper must be judged as an intolerable punishment, and one only to be borne with the greatest mental and bodily suffering. Wherefore, so harsh and so biting to the taste are the fruits which this poisonous plant produces, and so sharp and cruel is the bitterness thereof, that rarely or never is there to be found one fallen under the sway of it who, while deeming that he will steer clear of the furies of Charybdis, will escape destruction in the whirlpool of the barking Scylla. In

* He was the last king of the Aragonese dynasty who ruled in Naples. The second son of Ferdinand I., he succeeded his nephew Ferdinand II. in 1496. He was deposed in 1501, and died at Tours in 1504.

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the novel which follows you will be instructed concerning a new form of jealousy, and a very strange sort of safeguard employed by a foolish and jealous fellow, who was bent not merely on preventing his wife from being regarded with amorous looks by gallants and lovers, but bent also on contriving so that she should not be espied by anyone in feminine dress: and likewise how it happened that, through his own handiwork, she was one day enjoyed as it were under his very eyes by a certain cavalier who was her lover.

THE NARRATIVE

TO come therefore to the matter I propose to deal with, I will tell you that in the times of my most illustrious lord, Duke Filippo Maria Visconti,* there lived in Milan a certain handsome and noble cavalier called by name Messer Ambrosio del Andriani. This same cavalier was young, rich, of very goodly person, and of excellent manners; and, being led by the generous bent of his rare intellect to become acquainted with the dignities and the famous deeds of the various princes of Christendom, he went searching after the same in many places both within and without the bounds of Italy. At last there was brought to him report of the magnificent state and the triumphal feasts which King Alfonso of immortal memory, your grandfather, was accustomed to maintain and to celebrate without intermission in the city of Naples, and on this account he determined to be a witness of these likewise, and thereby to satisfy his desires to the full. So, having put a thousand florins in his purse and furnished himself with horses and servants and raiment worthy of his condition, he took his way towards Naples.

When he had come there, and had well surveyed the many stately quarters of the city and the delightsome surroundings thereof, he came to the conclusion that the

* The last of the Visconti and grandfather of Ippolita of Aragon. He died in 1447. The terms used in speaking of him in this place have been held to imply that Masuccio was at one time in his service.

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Naples in which he was now abiding was no less fair than the Naples he had prefigured in his mind. Thus for this reason, and for that which had originally led him thither, he determined in his mind to tarry there, enjoying himself and living merrily as long as the money he had brought with him should serve his needs. It happened that he foregathered with certain gentlemen of Capuana,* and, having been taken by these now to festivals, now into churches, and now to joustings, places where great crowds of ladies were gathered together, he said one day to his companions, after he had well considered the dames around him, that in his opinion the ladies of Naples were better furnished with graceful presence and with womanly worth than rich in superabundant beauty. Whilst he was discoursing in this strain, a certain youth, one of his most intimate companions, Tommaso Caracciolo by name, who chanced to be present, affirmed that what the cavalier had just said was no other than the truth, and added somewhat on his own account, speaking thus: "If it should ever be your fate to catch sight of a young woman living at Nola, the wife of a certain shoemaker named Joanni Tornese, I doubt not at all but that you, following the example of divers others I have already heard speak on the matter, would straightway confess that this young woman is the most beautiful you have ever seen in Italy. But to bring this thing to pass seems to me almost impossible, seeing that the husband keeps her shut up in such fashion that no one, however closely related to her, can ever get sight of her, on account of his unheard-of jealousy, and on account of certain suspicions which have been kindled in his mind from a report that the Lord Duke of Calabria, having been inflamed by the fame of her marvellous beauty, seeks to put her to the proof.

* That is, of the Seggio di Capuana, which was the aristocratic quarter of Naples. The Seggi of Naples and of the other southern cities were relics of the Greek foundation. They were, according to Giannone, "Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli," particular districts, generally situated somewhere near the gates, in which certain influential families were wont to congregate for social intercourse and for political union. They were practically the same as the *Oratriai* of Athens. In Naples there were four, Capuana, Forcella, Montagna, and Nido—the last a corruption of Nilo.

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And if another tale be true which a neighbour of his, who is also a servant of mine, told me for certain (but I know not in sooth whether I ought to lend any credence to the same), you will hear a very strange report concerning her, and this is that the husband, so as not to leave her at home alone in his absence, is in the habit of always taking her with him to whatever place he may visit disguised in man's attire; and thus, without incurring any suspicion, he goes on his way rejoicing, and enjoys the merriest time that is possible for a peasant in this our land. Wherefore, if it would meet your wishes, I would suggest that we might go and make an attempt to get sight of her beauty."

Thereupon, without any farther parley, they set forth in company and betook themselves to the shoemaker's shop. Having come there, Tommaso said: "Master cobbler, have you by chance some pairs of neatly-made shoes which you can show to Messer Ambrosio here?" Whereupon Joanni replied: "Assuredly I have, at your pleasure." And having let enter the cavalier, he made him sit down on a bench, and began to fit certain shoes on his feet. Tommaso, who sought to lengthen out the time of such business, turned to them and said: "Come now, I will go on and despatch some affairs of my own at a place near by, while you are engaged in finding a well-fitting pair of shoes." And excusing himself with these words he went his way, and the shoemaker began forthwith to try the shoes on Messer Ambrosio, keeping his head bent down low as it is necessary for a man to do when engaged on such a task.

Messer Ambrosio in the meantime held his head erect, turning his face around on all sides, for the reason that every thought of his was bent on catching a glimpse of the beautiful mistress of the house; and, as his good fortune would have it, he fixed his eyes upon a little latticed window, and saw at the same the woman herself, who was looking down upon him in the shop below. As he had good space of time wherein to get a clear and perfect sight of her, he looked well at her, and in the end, after he had feasted his eyes on the rich and priceless beauties which were exhibited in her face, it seemed to him that she was in sooth endowed with an excellence of beauty

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far greater than that which his friend Tommaso had led him to expect. Thus, on account of the length of time which Master Joanni took in settling him with a pair of well-fitting shoes, he found plentiful opportunity not only of scanning closely her face, but also of letting her know by various soft and amorous signs how hotly he was burning with love for her sake.

Now the young woman, who was of a very wary temper, was well assured that, on account of her husband's extreme watchfulness, she would never find an opportunity of satisfying the cavalier's wishes by any act of hers, and, although she was filled with delight at the thought that she herself had seemed pleasant in the sight of such a gracious gentleman, she determined not to exhibit to him any sign of her goodwill or to return him any gracious answer. And in this fashion the fitting on of the shoes at last came to an end; whereupon the cavalier, having paid to the shoemaker double price for his wares, thus addressed him, with a merry look on his face: "In good sooth, I have never in all my life worn shoes which, according to my taste, have fitted me so well as these; wherefore see that you have ready for me every day a fresh pair of the same fashion, for which I will not fail to pay you always the same price." The shoemaker, overjoyed at his good luck, held it to be indeed a most fortunate accident which had led so gallant and magnanimous a cavalier to come into his shop, and, deeming that he might draw great profit from such custom in the future, he said: "So be it, in God's name! and I, on my part, give you promise that each time you come to my shop you shall find yourself served better and better."

In the meantime Messer Ambrosio returned to his friend Tommaso, rejoicing mightily, and telling him in what generous wise his kind fortune had dealt with him at the outset of the adventure, affirming at the same time that the face of this woman was by far the most lovely he had ever seen, but that with regard to the rest of her person he could give no opinion, for the reason that he had been able to get no glimpse thereof. He summed up his speech by begging his friend to give him freely whatever prudent counsel he might have to offer concerning

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the affair in question. Tommaso, although he harboured but little hope that the business would come to the issue the other desired, began, like the exceptional friend he was, to try to be of some service to Messer Ambrosio, and to sharpen his wits as best he could, without in any way letting drop the discussion or leaving the spot. In their conversation they ran over all such ways and means as fervent lovers are wont to dream of in crises of this sort, and when at last they fixed upon a particular one which seemed to them propitious and fitted to their needs, they proposed to bide their opportunity until the conditions of time and place should prove to be such as would let them conveniently carry their scheme into effect.

Now, seeing that the cavalier followed without fail his purpose of going every day to buy a fresh pair of shoes at the wonted price, it happened that the shoemaker, in order to lure him on to further spending, began to address him in yet more servile fashion, and would now and again invite him in the morning to partake of a light collation in a private apartment he had at the back of his shop, the cavalier feeling no small gratification at these blandishments. The friendship thus begun between the two men continued, and when the day of Santa Catarina had come, a day upon which great crowds of people are wont to betake themselves to Formello, Messer Ambrosio began to walk up and down in front of the Castello,* his lodging being very near thereto, and to speculate as to whether he might catch sight of Joanni Tornese at the festival, with his fair wife arrayed in the fashion already noticed. He had not waited there long when he espied from a distance Joanni Tornese with a young scholar leaning on his arm coming towards him; whereupon he straightway understood that the thing upon which he had already reckoned had indeed come to pass.

Now, as Joanni was going along, it chanced that there met him on the way a very close friend and gossip of his, and as they walked on in company this latter demanded to know who might be the young man he had with him;

* The Castello Capuano, which was built by the Hohenstaufens, and was their principal residence. Opposite to it is the church of Santa Catarina a Formello.

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whereupon Joanni answered him, as he had answered divers others before, that the youth was a brother-in-law of his, a student of medicine from Nola, who had come thither on a visit to his sister. Whilst they were talking in this strain they came to the spot where the cavalier was walking backwards and forwards, and after they had all saluted him by doffing their caps, and had been saluted by him in return, he fixed his eyes steadfastly on the face of the young scholar, and was soon well assured that the one he saw was she whom he had been awaiting with such keen desire. Then, with a joyful look on his face, he asked them whither they were bound, and they replied that they were on their way to Santa Catarina; whereupon Messer Ambrosio, having joined himself to their company, went along with them, and in the course of the way spake thus: "And I too on my part had purposed to go thither, and I was tarrying here by myself, awaiting the coming of my servants or of certain of my acquaintances who might bear me company; but, seeing that none of them have come, I will go with you." Then, having set out all together on their way, they arrived at last at the place where the festival was being celebrated, and found there assembled a vast crowd of people. On this account the cavalier had now and again a chance of pressing the hand of the young scholar to let her know clearly that he had recognized her, and when she, knowing perfectly well who he was, made answer to him in the same fashion, it seemed to him that his wishes were about to be fully accomplished, and he was satisfied beyond measure thereanent.

Early that same morning Messer Ambrosio had given full instructions to the host with whom he lodged as to everything that was necessary to be said and done for the carrying out of the project he had in hand, and had likewise despatched all his servants on various errands, so that not one of them would be seen until late in the day, Therefore he kept company with these people until the festival had come to an end, and then took his way back with them towards his lodging. When they had arrived in front of the house where he was staying, he took Joanni by the hand and began to speak to him in these

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words: "Good maestro, you have so often bidden me to your board, and have done me so much honour in your own house, that now it seems to me right and seemly that you, together with your companions, should stay here and take your breakfast with me this morning, although I am a stranger in these parts." Joanni, who, as we have heard before, was of a very jealous temper, and feared the very birds of the air for his wife's sake no less than men, felt very little in the humour to take her into an inn, albeit she had changed her woman's garb for that of a man. So more than once he refused the proffered invitation, and demurred to accept it; but at last, moved by the fear of giving offence to his friend, and urged on by the eager persuasions and promptings of his worthy gossip, he was induced to accede to Messer Ambrosio's request.

When all the company had gone together up to a small terrace where they found ready prepared a well-decked table, the cavalier called for the landlord forthwith, and demanded of him what had become of all his servants; whereupon the host answered and said that they were all gone to the market to buy oats and fodder. Hearing this, Messer Ambrosio feigned to be mightily disturbed, and said: "Though they should all be hanged by the neck we will carry out the affair we have in hand; wherefore do you have a care to give us something of the best for our repast." To this the host made answer in words which had been previously settled: "Messere, I have here prepared no delicate viands of the sort that would suit your taste." "How is that, you lazy rascal?" cried the cavalier. "In sooth I have a good mind to scoop out your eyes with this very hand. I have spent in your house more than two hundred florins, and now that I have brought hither with me these friends of mine, at whose hands I have received a thousand tokens of honour and kindness, you are not ashamed to tell me that you have nothing that is fit for us to eat." Whereupon the host, feigning to be frightened out of his wits, answered: "Do not be angry, messere, for were the king himself in the house you should be served straightway." But the cavalier, turning towards him in a furious rage, said to him: "Be off with you, then, beast that you are, and see that

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you put to roast for me some of the best capons you have." The landlord forthwith departed to carry out these orders, and the cavalier still kept up the show of being in a raging mood; whereupon his guests exhorted him to have patience, forasmuch as in any case he might, without fail, regard them as his devoted servants. Messer Ambrosio thanked them kindly and said: "In sooth, I am well minded to hang up one or other of these varlets of mine, when they shall come back, for having left me, as you see, alone by myself all day; and this over and beyond the failure of his duty on the part of the landlord."

Now Joanni saw nothing of the snare which lay hidden beneath these words; so, in order to appease him and to show himself willing to do aught which would gratify him' he said: "Is there anything you want, for we too all hold ourselves as being bound to serve you?" To this Messer Ambrosio replied: "And I look upon you as my brothers; but it happens to-day that I am in want of a little sauce or relish which is called mustard; indeed, I am in such a humour this morning that I could not eat roast meat without some of the same therewith. One of my servants knows the place where they sell it at a fair price and good in quality—somewhere, I think, in the old market. Now, seeing that I have no one here to send for this mustard, how can I be otherwise than angry with my servants on account of this fault of theirs?" Joanni had already begun to be somewhat out of humour with himself with regard to the offer of service he had made, for he would assuredly have felt monstrously ill at ease at leaving his wife alone for so long a time. Wherefore, without making any other proposition, he kept his tongue between his teeth. Messer Ambrosio, seeing the course things were taking, turned towards Joanni and spake thus: "Ah, my good maestro, if the task will not be very irksome to you, I beg you that you will go fetch for me this sauce, and by the time you shall have come back our dinner will be ready."

Poor Joanni as he listened was mightily ill-pleased, but it seemed to him that he would be behaving in an unseemly fashion were he to refuse to do so slight a service. And again he searched his brains in vain for any plausible

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excuse he might advance why he should take his wife along with him. Wherefore, not being able to hit upon any safeguard other than the help of his gossip, he went up to him and in a whisper recommended the young scholar to his care; and then, having taken from the table a sauceboat, he flew as quickly as he could to fetch the sauce. The cavalier, as soon as he saw that he was gone, turned towards the gossip who had been left on guard, and cried out: "Alas! after all I have forgotten the best part of what I wanted to tell him." Said the gossip: "And what do you still want?" Then the cavalier answered: "I wanted some oranges, but in my rage I quite forgot to tell Joanni of my need." The other replied, deeming the request to be made in good faith: "I myself will go and fetch you some forthwith, for as it happens I have some of the finest oranges in the world at my shop, which were brought to me yesterday from Salerno."

Having thus spoken, he forthwith went on his errand; whereupon Messer Ambrosio, being left alone with the young woman, and thinking there was no time to be lost, took her by the hand, and said: "And now, master physician, I am minded to tell you privily concerning a certain ailment with which I am troubled." Then, having led her aside into a chamber and taken her up to the bed which was therein, after that weak demur and resistance which those whose desire is solely towards practice of this kind are accustomed to put forward, they made upon the swiftest wings of desire a flight of supremest rapture, and scarcely was this finished when the gossip came back with the oranges. Finding the chamber door locked, he marvelled greatly within himself thereat, and having put his eye to a chink which he discovered, he beheld the cavalier, after he had taken his pleasure with the young woman, holding her in his arms, and giving her many secret and tender kisses. This thing which he saw caused him no little trouble, and, having turned himself away with an indignant face, he was assailed with the thought that the cavalier, overcome by nefarious vice, had borne himself lasciviously towards the fair young scholar who had been left in his keeping.

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Accordingly he went down to the entrance door, where he met Joanni; and the latter, not seeing his wife in company with the gossip, at once asked where his brother-in-law, the young scholar, might be, bearing himself the while like a man stunned and almost beside himself. To him the gossip answered in the following words: "Would to God that I had bitten out my tongue this morning, rather than have persuaded you to tarry in this place, forasmuch as I have now no longer any faith in that cavalier with whom you are on such intimate footing. At first, indeed, I reckoned him to be a man endowed with all the virtues, but I have lately discovered him to be as great a villain as ever lived." "Alas!" cried Joanni, "and what may have happened?" The other answered: "May God send him a bad year, forasmuch as this man, putting in practice the same guileful tricks by which he induced you to leave this place, also despatched me to fetch these oranges; and when, on my return, I found him locked in the bedchamber with your brother-in-law, I played the spy upon him through a chink of the door, and found that he was dealing with the young scholar as though with a fair and beautiful woman."

When poor Joanni heard this terrible news, he stood like a man who is neither dead nor alive, overwhelmed with confusion and quite beside himself. In this humour he went upstairs, where he found the cavalier seated at the table, and holding the young scholar in conversation as if nothing out of reason had happened. Then, turning towards him, and carried away by his grief and anger, he said, in a voice broken by sobs: "By my faith, sir, the Milanese courtesy* which you have shown towards me has indeed been great. But, seeing that you have been fain to eat the meat without waiting for the sauce, you shall now relish the sauce as best you may without ever again enjoying another taste of such a dish." Then Joanni, having dashed the sauceboat down on the table and seized his wife by the hand in a tempest of rage, cried: "Get up now, in the devil's name, and let us return home, seeing that we have paid our shot† without eating our

* Orig., *una gran cortesia Milanese.*

† Orig., *che senza mangiare noi avemo pagato lo scotto.*

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meat, and I, to make things worse, have brought you the sauce." Then, threatening her with a downright blow, he went his way with her.

The gossip who did not fathom the depth of the inward grief of Joanni, followed him down the stairs and kept on reproaching him that he should have cast so great an ignominy upon so distinguished a man, and all for the sake of a boy. "What can it matter? Do you mean to say you think he will become with child? Well, if it is done, it is done, and what need was there to fall into so grave an error, and to lose such a friend on account of so small an offence." But Joanni, as he made his way with hasty steps, was thinking of naught else than how he might convey his wife back to his house, and for this reason, and because of the fierce anger which was raging within him, he did not trouble to give his gossip a word in reply. The good gossip, however, would not on this account give over his reproaches, but kept on urging him straightway to repair the fault which he had committed on such trifling ground of offence. At last his molestations became more than Joanni could bear, so, all trembling with rage, he spake to his gossip thus: "Alas! my gossip, it will not be any fault of yours if I do not this morning curse God and all those who dwell in the courts of Paradise. Cannot you see that this is my wife?" "But how can that be?" said the other. "Why should you take her about with you in this fashion?" Thereupon Joanni, with plentiful tears, told him the reason why he had acted in this wise.

The gossip, who was a shrewd fellow, first read Joanni a severe lesson for his folly, and then went on to counsel him thus: "My Joanni, you were indeed ill-advised; and, on account of the crazy scheme you fashioned, a heavy and a deserved punishment has fallen upon you. You wanted to jump out of the frying-pan and you have fallen into the fire.* Alas! my poor fellow! How is it that you were not warned how wicked and corrupt the world is grown in these our days, and that it is much more difficult to keep guard over pretty boys than over women, and especially over such an one as this, who is in truth a lure for these hawks incarnate? In good sooth I have wondered a thousand

* Orig., *cercasti saltare della patella per dare in su la brasa.*

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times this morning that she was not snatched away from your arms. But now that the thing is done, and that you can blame no one thereanent except your own self, I will say that it befell you through your ill luck, and that in the future you had better make use of some other safeguard. If God has given you a woman for a wife it is not meet that you should seek to transform her into a man. I do not say that you should neglect to use whatever guard and precaution may be necessary with a young and beautiful woman, but of a surety you ought not to employ methods so unheard-of and so strange. In the end, forsooth, they will be found of little advantage; for when wives are fully minded to deceive their husbands, there never has been found in human ingenuity any precaution which has availed aught for the frustration of their intention. And be well assured that you are not the first, nor will you be the last, to receive buffets of this kind. Do but take an example from those men of eminent worth who have often fallen into snares like this. These prudently hide their mishaps whenever they can, so as not to add a lasting shame to the grief they feel already."

Thus, with exhortations and arguments such as these, and with divers others to boot, the good gossip went with Joanni as far as his house, pacifying him as best he could, and having left him there—for the reason that he saw no cause why he himself should be counted in the number of the duped ones—he made his way as quickly as he might back to the inn, where, having found the cavalier in the company of his good friend Tommaso, he joined himself to the party, and they all together made merry over the joke that had been played and over the dinner which had been ordered. Joanni, after long weeping and lamentation, died of grief; whereupon his wife, glad to be rid of him, married again, and tasted all the pleasures which belong to blooming youth without being transformed from her own and most comely seeming.

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MASUCCIO.

THE jest which was put upon Joanni Tornese for having let go abroad his wife disguised as a man induces me to go on from the beginning I have made in similar strain, and to tell of another most artful trick played by one of our Salernitans upon a certain host who was as inordinately jealous of his wife—a story which will differ indeed somewhat from the one I have just told, inasmuch as in it the lover put on the disguise of woman's attire. This lover, for the reason that all other methods of putting into execution his longed-for project were denied to him, brought his marvellous craft into action in such fashion that the husband himself was induced to conduct him to the very bed in which he afterwards lay with the wife, over whom the closest watch was kept. For the reason, however, that this husband never in after times came to know aught of what had occurred, he was not bound to let his life come to an end therefor, as was the case with the wretched Joanni, who, as soon as he was aware of the shame which had been put upon him, died outright.

THE END OF THE ELEVENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Twelfth

ARGUMENT

A CERTAIN YOUTH, BEING ENAMOURED OF THE WIFE OF AN INNKEEPER, PUTS ON THE GARB OF A WIDOW WOMAN, AND ARRIVES ONE NIGHT WITH ALL HIS ATTENDANTS AT THE HOUSE OF THE INNKEEPER AFORESAID. THE HOST, INDUCED BY PLAUSIBLE ARGUMENTS, PUTS THE PRETENDED WIDOW TO BED WITH HIS WIFE, WHO, AFTER WITHSTANDING SOMEWHAT, TAKES PLEASURE WITH HER LOVER, AND THE HOST, UNWITTING OF WHAT HAS BEFALLEN, IS PAID TWOFOLD.

TO THE EXCELLENT SIGNOR FEDERICO DAVOLOS,* THE MOST WORSHIPFUL COUNT AND CHAMBERLAIN.

EXORDIUM

I AM persuaded, excellent and most virtuous signor, that if we take into account the chief philosophizing investigators of those higher intelligences which guide the vicissitudes of the heavens and the order of the planets, as well as the great inventors and adepts who, working both by argument and judgment, deal with every product of Nature—I say, if we take the aforesaid, each one by himself or all together, we shall find that they have never been endowed with such subtlety of intellect and lively ingenuity as Love, our great lord, has lent and will for ever lend to the better part of those who in their fervent passion follow the glorious course of his victorious banner. And in sooth those who consider well how amazing, and altogether beyond comprehension, are the wiles of wicked women when they are minded to play

* He was the husband of the lady to whom Novel XXI. is dedicated. He came from Spain to the service of Alfonso the Magnanimous, with whom he was a prime favourite.

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their husbands false, will likewise find therein no small reason for wonderment. Wherefore we may assuredly give judgment and affirm that, in cases where the foresight of a crafty lover is conjoined with the evil nature of a wary woman, no human knowledge or circumspection will ever be found to supply a sufficient rampart against it. All this, my most prudent signor, you will be able to understand on your own part, and you may likewise give instruction, the truth of which no one can call in question, anent the same to all the rest of mankind now living on earth.

THE NARRATIVE

IN the years when this our city of Salerno was ruled by the sway of that glorious Pope, Martin V.,* the traffic of the place increased to a mighty volume, and merchandize in enormous quantities was brought thither without ceasing from every nation under the sun. On this account a vast number of outland handicraftsmen and others gathered together there and took up their abode, and amongst the rest came a certain worthy fellow from Amalfi, called by name Trifone, who was minded to follow the calling of an innkeeper in his new home. He brought with him his wife, a young woman endowed with no small beauty, and hired an inn in the street of our Seggio del Campo,† and likewise acquired another house in the quarter of the Porta Nova, situated in a very decent and secluded court—a spot near which no one

* Ottavio Colonna, elected pope at the Council of Constance in 1417, under the title of Martin V. His election is a landmark in the history of the papacy, inasmuch as it put an end to the Great Schism, John XXIII., Benedict XIII., and Gregory XII. being deposed in his favour. In one of her many disputes with Sforza, Joanna II. conferred Salerno upon Antonio Colonna, who held the city in the name of his uncle the Pope, by way of enlisting the papal influence on her side. Her successor, Alfonso of Aragon, took the city from the Colonnas and gave it to Raimondo Orsini.

† Salerno, like Naples, was divided into Seggi. The Seggio del Campo was Masuccio's own quarter of the city.

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would pass unless he should have some colourable reason therefor.

After he had duly settled his wife and his family in the aforesaid house, it happened that a certain gentleman of our city of the most honourable lineage, whose name for many good reasons I have determined not to disclose in this place, fell deeply in love with this young woman, the wife of Trifone. Now this gentleman, who in sooth was tormented with the fiercest pricks that ever lover felt, could devise no method whereby he might find some place in which he might satisfy his desires; nor was he bold enough, seeing in what close custody the over-jealous husband kept his wife, to patch up a conspiracy with her in order to procure their foregathering. Wherefore he determined to employ in this affair the arts of a certain old woman who was well known to him, one of those pedlars who go wandering about the streets offering for sale such trifles and gewgaws as ladies love. One day, after he had made his wishes known to her, and given her all necessary instructions for the forwarding of the same—together with promises of liberal reward in case of success—she, who was both ready and anxious to serve him, went her way to set about the business. After having traversed divers of the quarters of the city she came at last to the one in which the young woman dwelt, and having come there, she addressed now this woman and now that, offering her wares for sale the while, until at last she approached the door where stood the innkeeper's wife; whereupon, without letting anyone hear what she said, she spake thus: "And you, my pretty lady, cannot I sell you any of my dainty wares? I know full well that if I were as young and handsome as you are I would not fail to buy some new thing every day, and thus, by letting art improve what Nature made, render myself beautiful beyond compare." "Alas!" cried the young woman, "you only wish to make a jest of me." Then replied the pedlar, "By the Lord, I speak no more than the truth when I declare that there is a rumour spread through all the parts hereabout that you are by far the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. And although I heard certain gentlewomen, in a house where I chanced to be of late, speak in

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envious and unreasonable wise in disparagement of your beauty (so that they might thereby commend their own) and declare that you were not of high birth, and divers other things of a like character—remarks such as women of this class are wont to utter, forasmuch as their eyes are ever ready to start out of their heads when they espy beauty in one of our condition, nevertheless there was present a young man of a noble house (I know not whether you may have acquaintance with him), who made answer to them in such terms as their speech deserved, and ended by declaring that, as far as beauty was concerned, not one of them was worthy to pull off your shoes."

The young woman, when she listened to these words, replied: "God help them then! and, if it be not unseemly to ask, it would please me mightily to know the names of these said gentlewomen, and also that of the noble youth who spoke in my defence." The old woman, who was all the time craftily spreading her nets, replied: "I will not just now let you know the names of these ladies, forasmuch as I am not minded to speak ill of anyone, but I feel I need not hold back from you the name of the young man." And then, without waiting farther speech from the other, she gave both his name and his family, and added: "But what words he spake to me over and beyond what I have told you, I do not mean to reveal to you unless you shall first swear to me that you will hold them secret."

The young woman, after the fashion of her sex, was altogether overborne with curiosity to know what these words might be, and gave her promise never to reveal them to anyone; whereupon the crone, using the deepest cunning the while, began to speak in this wise: "My daughter, I would in sooth be unwilling to counsel you in any matter which might perchance come to an issue fraught with dishonour to you, and, besides, this I would remark that it is not wise to give ear to everything men may say. He indeed told me that he loves you more than he loves himself; that he is enamoured of you in such fashion—so he swore—that he had, for love of you, lost both his sleep and his appetite as well, and was consumed like a burning taper. And although I have reminded you, and still remind you, that it behoves you to keep guard over your

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honour and your good name, than which there is no more precious possession in all the world, still I cannot keep silent my tongue and hold back from telling you that, as I view it, you could commit no more heinous sin than let such a youth as this die of his pain. Indeed, it seems still worse, when one considers how praiseworthy and amiable are his ways; how well-mannered he is, how liberal, and how honest. He was, in sooth, most anxious to give me a pretty little ring, in order that I might convey the same to you on his behalf; but I, being doubtful about your feelings towards him, told him I could not, at present, do such a thing. If you only knew what it is that he desires of you so ardently, I am assured you might easily find a way of granting it to him without letting your honour suffer at all thereby. He declares to me that he asks for naught else than that you should be willing to accept his love; that, as a reward for this devotion of his, you should show some disposition to give him a little love in return; and that, if at any time he should send you some small gift, you will deign to accept the same and to wear it for his sake. Now, my daughter, prayers like these do not seem to me to be very difficult to grant, and you, forsooth, ought to give ear to them sooner than any other young woman I know, so that you may not let your youth slip by without plucking some of the flowers thereof, remembering always that, for the sake of your honour, you are forbidden to taste its luscious fruits."

The young woman, when she listened to these tender words, tricked out with so many specious arguments by the cunning go-between, felt that she was, as it were, almost constrained by necessity to take the young man for her lover, albeit she was most honest by nature and in no wise disposed to overstep the bounds of her innate goodness. Wherefore, turning to the old woman, she spake to her thus: "Come now, Madonna, I will let you go back to the gentleman and tell him that for love of his worth and goodness I am willing to accept him as my one and only admirer, but let him be well assured that this is all he need ever expect to get from me. Tell him, likewise, to have good heed that he keep the matter a secret, and

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not fall into the error which besets most young men, who, as soon as they find themselves amongst their merry companions, go boasting, not only of the things they do, but also of the things they have never done and never seen. Tell him, too, that I would sooner die than that this matter should come to the knowledge of my husband, who is more jealous than any other man in the world."

When she heard this the crone was satisfied that in this first essay of hers she had worked to some good purpose, marking that the affair was certainly moving in the right direction; so she made answer to the young woman in this wise: "My daughter, your words are indeed most prudent; but I would wish you to know that this young man, amongst his other remarkable virtues, is gifted with a most secretive nature, and, as God may let me make a good end, I swear that when he laid bare this secret of his to me, he not only made me promise him with more than a hundred oaths that I would never let it become known to anyone, but also on his own part trembled like a reed, and the colour of his face took to itself a thousand varying hues with every moment that passed. Wherefore I beg you not to let any doubt as to his secrecy, keep you back from giving him your love, for of a surety the day will come when you will pique yourself on having the handsomest and the worthiest gallant in the world, and one, moreover, upon whose silence and secrecy you may fully rely. And although the favour which you here concede to him may seem a great one—and indeed you have given him all he asked—nevertheless I will not cease to call up in your mind the thought of the loss you will suffer if you should thus persist in letting waste your flowering youth in such wretched fashion. If, forsooth, ill fortune and the action of your parents have been the means of giving you so ugly and so baseborn a man for your husband, that is no reason why you should insist on being your own enemy; nay, it is rather a cause why you should cast about to find some means of giving yourself pleasure, seeing that there is no grief so bitter as the regret of old age over the neglected opportunities of youth." And then, putting on an air somewhat of mystery, she went on, saying: "Do you know what I will say to him as coming from you? I will

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tell him that it will be all his own fault if he does not find out for himself some way by which you and he may foregather."

To these words of the crone the young woman replied, putting on some show of indignation as she spoke: "By my faith, you will do well to have a care that you tell him no such words as these. It will suffice well enough if you tell him those which I directed you to bear to him and no more." Then said the old woman: "I beseech you that you will not be angry with me, nor wonder why it is that I am thus importunate; but I swear to you, by the sign of the cross* which I now make, that if I should not bear back to him some good news he will assuredly make an end of himself. However, I now recommend him to you as much as ever I can; and, in order that he may lend belief to the gracious answer you have given me to bear to him, I now beg you to take care to let yourself be seen by him to-morrow in the church of Saint Agostino, and when he shall rub his nose in this wise and say to you, 'I commend myself to you,' you shall reply to him as you brush your hair aside from your face, 'And I myself to you likewise.' In such fashion you shall pass the time until Fortune shall send you a better way of enjoyment." To this the young woman answered: "And I, too, on my part, will be generous to him and commend myself to him a thousand times. Tell him to come to-morrow morning, and tell him likewise that I cannot remain long in the church."

Therefore, when the crone had gone her way, the young woman stood some time letting fresh fancies engage her heart, in which, by reason of the impressive words she had just listened to, she seemed to feel a worm gnawing without ceasing. The old woman went straightway in search of the lover, and when she had found him she told him, point by point, everything that had happened, and what had been the result of her embassy. The youth, hugely delighted at the news she brought to him, was early astir the following morning, and went without delay to the appointed spot, where he at once espied the young woman, who had made herself even more lovely than she was as she stood, fresh from the hand of nature. And not only did

* Orig., *io ti giuro per questa croce.*

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he get from her a greeting vastly more gracious than ladies are wont to give on such occasions, but he was also granted the promised answer to his covenanted signal; wherefore he found himself in such a state of joy and delight as he had never before known.

To pass briefly over the affair, the lady at last left the church, and the lover made his way home to ponder and to consider in what fashion it would be granted to him to pluck that supreme fruit of love which he so greatly desired, and having run over many and various expedients for the compassing of this end, he settled at last after much deliberation upon a certain one. By this he determined that, happen what might, he would make his way into her house in such a manner that she should perforce grant him that boon which he desired beyond anything else in the world, and indeed had already begun to taste in anticipation. Having laid bare his plan to certain gentlemen of Capuana,* who had come into the city to spend the holy season with the archbishop, who was their kinsman, they sent off late one evening a number of mules and horses great enough for the purpose they had in view to a certain spot outside the city. Then, when the lover, in the garb of a widow woman, and wearing a riding-hood and a bonnet, and two other youths similarly disguised in women's garb, had gone thither and duly mounted the pack-horses which had been prepared for them, they took their way, accompanied by the rest of the party on horseback, towards the city as soon as the night had fallen.

Now when they arrived at the Seggio del Campo they found that the host of the inn aforesaid, as soon as he heard the trampling of the horses, came out after the fashion of hosts and said to them: "Sirs, are you minded to take up your lodging here?" And to this one of the company replied: "In sooth we are. Have you good stalls for our beasts and beds for ourselves?" "Indeed, sir, I have," the host answered; "you have but to dismount and you will be served in the best fashion." The one who had spoken then drew the host aside and said to him: "See good host, the excellent character you bear has led us to seek your roof to-night; nevertheless, we find it fitting to

* Of the Seggio di Capuana in Naples.

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demand of you that guarantee of security which the exigencies of our present affairs demand; for you must know that we have here with us the daughter of the Count of Sinopoli, who has recently been left a widow through the death of the late Messer Gorello Caracciolo, her husband. Now we are at present conducting her back, in her mourning, as you see, to her father's house, and we are unwilling for the sake of decency to allow her to sleep at an inn this night, should it be found possible to bestow her elsewhere. Wherefore, out of your courtesy, we beg you that you will do your best to find some worthy woman with whom she may take her lodgment this night, together with the two maids who attend upon her; and if you shall do this we will pay you for such accommodation double what it may be worth."

To him the host replied, saying: "My lord, I know no one in this quarter of the city who is of condition good enough to do this thing which you ask. Nevertheless, I will offer to do for you all that lies within my power. The truth is, that my own house, where my wife, who is a very young woman, resides, is not far distant from here; wherefore, if it be pleasing to you, the lady might well lodge with her. As to the payment for the same, that shall be left to your pleasure." Whereupon the gentleman, turning to the widow lady, said: "You see, Madonna Francesca, how it is. It seems to me that you will be vastly better lodged in the house of this worthy man in the company of his wife and of your maids than here with us in the inn." Then the lady, with a low voice, answered that she was quite content with what had been suggested, and the host, having left them in charge of a youth who would point out to them the way, ran forward quickly to the house. When he came there he summoned his wife, and gave her orders that she should, as quickly as she could, get the bedchamber in order, forasmuch as a certain countess, a widow still in her first youth, must needs find lodging with them for the night. The young woman, whose thoughts were far removed from all deceit and trickery, made answer to her husband in the sincerity of her heart: "My husband, you know what the house is like. Nevertheless, I will do all that is possible." Then said

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the husband: "See that the place be put in readiness for her forthwith, and prepare for her warm water with perfume thereto; for she will assuredly have great need of the same, seeing that she is covered with mud of the roads."

In the meantime the lady, escorted by two gentlemen of the company, had arrived at the door, and the two, having let her dismount from the saddle and taken her in their arms, led her into the bedchamber, the two attendant maids following after them. As soon as she had come into the room she made a sign that she was minded to undress herself, and straightway gave dismissal to those who had come in with her. The host, when he perceived what she did, felt that it became him not to remain; for which reason he, turning towards his wife, thus addressed her: "I commit the service due to this lady into your hands; wherefore look narrowly that everything be daintily prepared for her supper and for her night's rest. See, too, that you lock yourselves securely within the house. I meantime will go back to the inn to see to the wants of her followers and of the other guests who await me there." And having placed these commands upon her he went his way, and for their better safeguarding he locked them in the house from the outside, and having given the key of the door to one of the lady's attendants, he went back with them towards the inn.

Thus the young woman was at last left alone with her lover, and, holding him in very truth to be a woman like herself, she was mightily eager to be of some service in helping the so-called lady to disarray herself, and it seemed as if it were a thousand years before she could indeed discover whether or not the lady was comely to look upon. She took away with her own hands the gear which concealed the stranger's face, and then, after she had gazed upon the same attentively, and had remarked therein somewhat of the seeming of her lover, she drew back quickly, overcome with shame and timidity. Now he, when he perceived that she stood thus confounded, began to be fearful lest there might befall some danger of the sort which so often arises through the imprudence of young women; so he straightway determined that the season had now come when she might be made privy to the trick

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he had devised. So, catching her by the hand, he folded her in his arms, and began to speak to her in the following words; "O sweetest life of mine, I am in truth your faithful and constant lover, and I have come hither to you in this fashion because, what with the great jealousy of your husband on the one part, and your own exceeding honesty on the other, every way of accomplishing my wishes seemed blocked to me, save and except this one alone, which was disclosed and laid open to me by Love, our sovereign lord. For the reason that I have been led by him, as you see, into your sweet embraces, I implore you that, for the sake of the good name of both of us, and for our gratification as well, that you should, in discreet and cautious wise, allow me to have delight of the passionate ardours which now consume me, and turn towards your one and most devoted servant with all the concord and quietness which prudent women use, so that we together may pluck those sweet and most pleasant joys which are the fruit of our youth."

The young woman, what though she was sorely angered at what had been done, and more than once made trial to free herself from her lover's embrace, knew, nevertheless, that if she should cry out for help it would only serve to bring lasting disgrace upon her. Moreover, from the beginning she had been kindly affected towards the young man; so she straightway took counsel with herself, and made up her mind to give him what, peradventure, she would not have refused him had she been quite free to follow her own wishes, and turning towards him said: "As my husband's want of wit has proved to be the means of bringing you here, I do not mean to drive you away, and thereby run into disgrace which will last my life and then, since I have been, as it were, given into your hands, it seems to me that there is naught left for me to say, but to beg you, in the name of heaven and of that virtue to which your nobility binds you, that you will have good care of my honour if you satisfy your desires with me." The lover rejoiced greatly when he listened to these words, and kissed her passionately, telling her at the same time there was no need for her to doubt or fear at all, forasmuch as he would be ever ready to sell his own life, should such

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a thing be necessary, for the preservation of her honour and good fame.

Then, after he had subdued her spirit with this and with divers other gentle and flattering speeches, these two lovers, before they moved from the spot where they were, tasted the first fruit of their love; and then, when they had refreshed themselves with a delicate repast, and gone to bed together, they spent the whole night in delightful wise, being overcome with desire the one for the other. Moreover, they came to an understanding together, in order that they might in the future compass the satisfying of their desire in less hazardous wise, and, when the daylight broke in the east, the gentlemen who were escorting the newly-made countess having got in order their packhorse train, and found their lady ready dressed for the road, set her on horse-back at once, and paid the good host a sum of money much greater than was his due. And, albeit they made as if they were journeying towards Calabria, they nevertheless went back that same night to their homes joking and making merry not a little. Lastly, the lover gave a very generous guerdon to the crone who had acted as go-between, and for a long time tasted much pleasure and delight in the company of the young woman. And to such a happy fate may Love lead you, my most worthy signor, whenever you may especially desire to partake of the same.*

MASUCCIO

THE trick which was put upon the Amalfitan innkeeper may in sooth be set down as very singular and very neat as well. The fellow, moreover, must have been beyond measure stupid to have shown such complaisance. And I doubt not that we shall find many ladies of the sort who are chary of their words, and are over-nice in finding fault† in order that they may be rated as prudent dames, who will declare that if they should ever hap-

* There is perhaps no other phrase in the "Novellino" which is so manifest a borrowing from Boccaccio as this.

† Orig., *le quali parlano raro e sputano tondo.*

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pen to fall into such a case as was the young woman's I have just described, they would sooner kill themselves than consent to yield to the wishes of their lover. Wherefore I know not for the moment how to make answer to such as these, except to pray to God that He will not grant to them such great favour as to bring them into the condition of having that thing forced upon them which they most earnestly desire above aught else. But in sooth their wisdom and forecast are so great that they must rarely find themselves brought into such straits and perils as these; moreover, they are generally most studious to let follow whatever working the lover may desire, concerning which matter I will speak more at length in another place.

But what shall we say of the noteworthy craft and the masterly methods discovered by the old crone who acted as go-between by which the lover won his way into the good graces of his mistress? We might in sooth say much thereanent; but, because in this our time the art of the pander has come to be such a fine and subtle one that not only old people, but very young ones as well, are found who can ply the same most skilfully even in their sleep, I will hold my peace, and say no more about it. Wherefore, passing on to a fresh subject, I will tell a story of another noteworthy cheat put upon the person of a governor of our city, a native of the Marches, by a young Salernitan. This jest, forsooth, was so hugely fine and facetious that even now as I write thereanent I cannot in any way keep back my laughter; and that it is true many who are now alive in our city can bear me witness.

THE END OF THE TWELFTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Thirteenth

ARGUMENT

PANDOLFO D'ASCARI IS MADE GOVERNOR OF SALERNO. HE TAKES A WIFE AND FAILS IN HIS DUTY TOWARDS HER. A CERTAIN YOUTH OF THE CITY BECOMES ENAMOURED OF HER, AND PLAYS A STRANGE JEST IN THE MATTER OF A SWORD OF HIS. ONE DAY THE GOVERNOR'S WATCH CAPTURES THIS YOUNG MAN AND TAKES HIM BEFORE THE COURT, WHEREUPON THE SWORD AFORESAID IS DISPLAYED TO VIEW, THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE BEING PRESENT. THE GOVERNOR IS MIGHTILY INCENSED AND BANISHES THE YOUNG MAN; BUT, THE STORY BEING NOISED ABROAD IN THE CITY, THE GOVERNOR DIES OF VEXATION, WHEREUPON THE YOUNG WIFE TAKES HER PLEASURE WITH HER LOVER.

TO THAT MOST EXCELLENT GENTLEMAN, BERNARDO SANSEVERINO, CONTE DI LAURIA*

EXORDIUM

IF, my most excellent and worthy sir, I have been somewhat remiss in writing to you up to this present time, it has been for no other reason than because I am of opinion that the matter with which I have heretofore busied myself, would not only have failed to give you any pleasure, but would even have called up in your mind something of irksomeness or distaste. Wherefore, in order to avoid any such unseemliness as the aforesaid, I have at last found out a fashion of writing which will, I doubt not, assure me that you will always in the future

* He was a younger son of Roberto di Sanseverino, and perished in the conspiracy of the barons. Masuccio has probably given him a wrong title as Porzio speaks of "Barnaba, Conte di Lauria" ("Congiura de Baroni," p. 50; Florence, 1884).

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extend towards me that accustomed courtesy of yours in benevolent and pleasing wise. Therefore I will let you read in the following novel concerning the flout which a certain governor of our city, a man jealous beyond all bounds, had to endure—a jest which in the end brought upon him great loss and injury. In this, too, you will be able to judge clearly how dangerous and foolish an undertaking it is to go about equipped with arms which are of no service, and to try to battle with weakly muscles against that poisonous viper which is able to hold its own even in circumstances of the greatest peril. Assuredly likewise those, to whom both powder and flint are lacking, will find it a sorely difficult task to fight against the inexpugnable rocks. And although the lesson I teach may not in any way concern yourself, for the reason that, however great the quantity of artillery that might be needed for any enterprise, you would always find yourself most excellently furnished with the same, nevertheless it ought not to be in any way irksome to you, for that I now bring before you good and valid proof of this same fact: to learn how to provide for the future, and especially to secure yourself against the instability of fickle fortune, so that such mischance as happened to the governor aforesaid may never happen to you.

THE NARRATIVE

IT was formerly the custom of our princes of the house of Orsini* to send us here as a governor a creature of the sort which is, in sooth, vastly more familiar with the management and feeding of cattle than in the exercise of the functions of a magistrate. On this account they once sent us, amongst the rest, a certain man from the Marches, Pandolfo d'Ascari by name, one not only penurious, as is the disposition of all his countrymen, but miserly beyond all measure. Now this governor brought with him a great crowd of ill-disciplined underlings, very

* For the grant of Salerno to the Orsini, see note, p. 171, to Novel XII. After the rebellion of Felice Orsini the lordship of the place was given to Roberto di Sanseverino, Count of Marsico.

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badly furnished with accoutrements, and divers men disguised after some new fashion in masks. Nevertheless, amongst those of more honour and repute, there was an old grey-headed man, his assessor, who, albeit he had a long tale of years behind him, would still have been found better stocked with knowledge as to how to manage or set a pattern on the weft in the loom than to say aught, little or great, concerning the laws.

Now the governor, having at last entered into the discharge of his office with no little pomp and bravery, issued to the guard which was wont to keep the watch a certain order by which he forbade any frequenting of the streets by night, or the carrying of arms; and, over and beyond this, he put forth many other new rules and regulations. And howbeit it happened that he and all those about him were, as it has already been remarked, very ill furnished with arms of the sort which are used in assaults upon men; still, by reason of something which in after time was made plain to the sight of all, it was discovered, by a most unlucky accident, that there was in the governor himself a similar lack in those other weapons and instruments which are more especially at the service of the ladies. But notwithstanding this, as misfortune chanced, a certain disease fell upon his little genital member, in the treatment of which the doctors so trimmed him, that, notwithstanding it was left split in two parts it could by no means be judged suitable to the purpose for which it was originally intended. Now this man, when he was at last in a way cured of his ailment, notwithstanding the fact that he was now old and impotent, never ceased to follow out a certain project of his with the utmost assiduity and care—the project aforesaid being nothing else than the taking to himself a wife. At last he fell violently in love with a young Genoese damsel of very high birth and exceedingly fair to look upon, who, a few days before this, had come out from a certain religious house into which her father by reason of his poverty had sent her to become a nun.

Although the head of the order and all the chapter of the brotherhood put forth all their efforts to save themselves the loss of so valuable a booty, nevertheless, when

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they saw clearly that the damsel was altogether determined to lay down her life sooner than go back for any time into the convent, and were finally convinced that all their toil would be futile, they put aside their grief and trouble and began to rage violently against her, and ended by pronouncing against her the public sentence of excommunication, seeing they could in no other method work their vengenace upon her. On this account the lovesick governor, taking no heed of the fact that he was old and worn out, or that the girl had been a nun—which thing should have been of no small weight—but considering solely her youth and beauty, took her for his wife, all poor and penniless as she was. Then with great feastings and rejoicings he brought her home to his house, and gave her to wear the raiment suited to a person of high estate. Wherefore his imagination, as it ever befalls in the case of old men, swelled within him in such wise that he began to let forth boasts and threatenings as to the wonders he was going to work; nevertheless on the bridal night it happened that his powers were found wanting in such degree that, in lieu of the marvellous deeds he had bragged about, he was able to accomplish nothing better than kissings and bitings, on account of which what though he began to put forward a lot of fictitious arguments in his own defence, the young wife knew well enough, from this one trial, in what most wretched state of life she was fated to pass her flowering youth.

The governor, although it took him some time to learn that kisses alone are of little avail in business of this sort, but rather act upon ladies like a spoonful of lard thrown upon the fire, and that the mare's appetite will not grow less lusty merely because there is a lack of fodder, made up his mind at last to set about his task in no niggardly fashion, however ill-accoutred therefor he might find himself. But in sooth his powers had declined to a point which would suffice no more for the satisfying of the craving appetite of the lady, than would a meal of falcons stay the hungry stomach of ravening wolf. Now after she had spent her life for a certain time in this sad and bitter wise, it chanced that a certain doctor of laws of this our city fell violently in love with her. He was young, of a seemly

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person, of great worth, and of a very honourable family; and after he had by many and various experiments tried all the roads by which he might win an entry into her favour, and met with little success in his enterprise on account of the extraordinary caution exercised by the jealous husband, he made up his mind to commit his venture entirely to the good offices of fortune, and to rid himself of all trouble thereanent.

Wherefore, being of this mind, and having taken into his confidence a young man who was a citizen of the place, it came into his mind to play off a noteworthy joke upon the governor, and in his very presence to let the young wife know how well fitted he himself was to give her succour in the particular need which pressed so heavily upon her. The young man remarked how every day the catchpoles of the court would make their rounds about the city, seizing the arms of any one they might meet, and taking the bearers thereof straight off to the prison of the governor, who meantime was wont to continue all day in his chamber with his fair young wife. He sent the young man, secretly, to a master wood-carver, and had fashioned a model of the male member, greater than the natural size, well proportioned, colored and adorned as though it were of the veritable flesh, and to the end of it he had fitted the handle of a sword, and placing it within a long scabbard, hung it at his side. And then with divers other companions of his he set himself to walk boldly up and down in the presence of the officers of the court, and they, as soon as they caught sight of him, straightway gathered round about him like hungry wolves, and, greedy for prey, called out to him, "Give us here those arms of yours, and come before the governor at once, and pay the fine enjoined by the proclamation." The young man, highly pleased at the turn things had taken, refused to give up his arms, but said that he was quite willing that they should take him into the governor's presence, where he would forthwith let them know what the reason was which led him to carry arms. So, having placed him in the midst of their band, they haled him along with much shouting and violence towards the palace; and, when the officers and their prisoner had entered the apartment, they found there the governor playing

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chess with his young wife, the grey-headed old judge bearing them company.

When he heard the uproar made by the entry of this crowd of people, the governor lifted up his eyes from the board and saw before him a young man carrying arms; whereupon, giving over his game of chess, in which in sooth he had not done much more than give his wife a kiss, he rose to his feet and turned to the young man, deeming the while that he might make a good profit out of this business, and thus addressed him: "Tell me what authority allows you to carry arms; and, failing this, what presumption of your own has thus stirred you up to break the law, seeing that no man of this city, however high his rank may be, ever takes it upon himself to go armed?" To this the young man, with a smile upon his face, made answer: "Messer, the arms I carry are in no way those which can do hurt or injury to any man, but are rather concerned with a vow made by a certain gentleman of my acquaintance." Now when the governor listened to these words he was seized with the belief that the young man was making a mock of him, and, boiling with rage, he caught hold of him by the breast with one hand, while with the other he grasped the hilt of the counterfeit sword, and strove with all his might to draw the same forth from its sheath. The young man on his part clung tightly to his weapon, and called out, "Messer, I beg you will not do me this wrong. I assure you this is no deadly weapon which I have here. Let me go about my business; for if you still detain me, I will avail myself of the censure of the Syndic."*

The governor thereupon became more inflamed with rage than ever, and fully made up his mind that he would

* Orig., *me ne aiutero dal Sindacato.* In the Italian cities there was a communal right by which the people were able to pass in review and even to censure the action of their rulers, whether they were under the head of the state, or under some baron like the Orsini, Lord of Salerno, at this time. This right the origin of which is hard to trace, was jealously guarded, and was not finally abolished till 1805. Any citizen who might feel himself aggrieved by anything done by the governor, might avail himself of the *Sindacato*, and go to the municipal magistrates, who at the end of the year would call upon the governor to give an account of his administration.

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get possession of this weapon, what though he might have to steal it. Therefore, having called upon all his catchpoles to help him, he at last hauled it out of its scabbard, whereupon the lady herself, and all those who were present, were able to see what strange thing it was he held in his hand. Then everyone began to laugh louder than he had ever laughed in his life at the expense of the governor, upon whose face every little vein might have been counted, so grievously was he angered by what had happened. On this account he, inflamed with no little rage from the fact that he had found something differing vastly from what he had sought, was on a sudden struck by an idea that he could fathom the reason how this thing had come to pass, and for a while he stood all giddy and confused, bearing this strange ensign gripped tight in his hand, and feeling that he could neither with decency retain the same or put it away from him.

However, when he had got his wits back somewhat, and had come to the determination to let the youth smart under a severe punishment for having thus gone about bearing counterfeit arms, he turned to the old judge and said: "Master Judge, quid videtur vobis?" The lubber-headed old man made answer to him in his doggrel speech: "Messer, in good truth this man ought to be held worthy of being visited with grievous chastisement, but 'De jure longobardo,'* we can in no way reach him." The governor, who had, though very late, been brought to see that this assessor of his was a fool, now made up his mind that he would on his own account make full inquisition into all the circumstances which could have tended to bring to pass the matter now before him. Therefore, turning towards the young man, he thus addressed him: "By God's faith, you shall not go forth from this place until you shall have told me, albeit against your will, all

* In Italy the Gothic and Lombard legal systems introduced many new principles into Roman jurisprudence. The Lombard laws were issued by King Rotharis in 643. The Lombards at this time were Arians, so the Church had no co-legislation with the temporal rulers. For nearly five hundred years the Lombards ruled the south of Italy from Capua to Tarentum—a fact which will explain the survival of their jurisprudence instanced in the text.

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that it is expedient to tell concerning this affair." The young man, seeing that now fortune, step by step, was working favourably for the success of his enterprise, spake in reply, without losing a moment of time, and said: "Messer, since you are determined to know what there is to tell about this thing, I will lay it before you with all respect to Madonna, whom I see here present: Not long ago, there fell upon the secret member of a certain doctor of laws, a painful and dangerous disease, which no physician was able to cure, and in despair he tried that source of help which none should despise. Making a vow that he would hang up at the altar of the most blessed Saints Ciro and Joanni, each year, an image, in wax, made in the likeness of his own virile member, trusting that by this act of devotion, and through the holy merits of these blessed saints, he would be made well and sound again. Wishing to put his vow into effect, and not finding in this city any master workman who was willing or able to make the waxen image, he was forced to have yonder model carved in wood, and give it to me, begging me to carry it to Naples, where I have a friend, a modeller able to reproduce it in wax, and as it appeared unfitting that I should carry it about uncovered, the idea came to fit a handle upon it, and to carry it in a scabbard similar to a sword.

Behold then the error I have committed, and if it has merited punishment, then in the name of God I am ready to receive it and thus to make amends. The lady meanwhile had found opportunity to look and examine the weapon in question; holding it as a fact that all which her lover had referred to was the truth, she gave over the laughing mood which until now possessed her, and began to sigh deeply, and, considering how vastly what she saw differed from something else she knew too well, she cried out in a rage, "Messer, I beg you to throw away that wretched thing you have in your hand, and in God's name let this man go, so we may finish our game of chess."

Hereupon the governor flew in a great rage, but knowing well enough that he could not in the course of justice inflict any punishment on the young man, and that, the more he should bandy words with him, the more fresh

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cause of offence he would encounter, he cast down the harmless weapon upon the floor with a furious gesture, and then, turning towards the young man, said: "Down before me, you gallows thief. Of a truth you are of a villainous and execrable breed, and, as far as I myself am concerned, I deserve all this and worse because, having been informed that you were unwilling to come here, and knowing, moreover, that the Salernitans will deceive the devil himself, I ought never to have wanted to see what you had to bring forward as a proof; but by my faith you shall never trick me again, forasmuch as I will quit this town and betake myself otherwhere. Now get you gone from here, and may bad luck go with you, and see that this city be clear of you in the space of two hours; for if I catch you here after that time, I will have you seized as a rebel against the state."

The youth, when he saw that the whole affair was likely to come to an end in words, and that he had at the same time done excellent service to his friend, took little care as to what might follow; and, having picked up his weapon from the floor, and tendered his thanks to the court, went out from the chamber. Then, having gone round all the public places and the various quarters of the city, he made bitter complaint on the subject of his exile, and on every side he told over and over again the story of what had befallen him, causing the while the greatest laughter and merriment amongst those who listened to his words.

Now some time after this it chanced that the prince* aforesaid made a journey to Nola, and while he was there in the presence of all his courtiers and of a number of other people all carrying arms, someone told to him from beginning to end the story aforesaid concerning that governor he had sent from the Marches to rule Salerno, and how the affair had come about. After he had laughed mightily at hearing the story, he found himself so hugely diverted thereat, that he caused the same to be related to him over and over again in the presence of all the people standing around, and afterwards he gave full licence to the young doctor of laws to return to the city. Not only did the latter go back to Salerno, but he likewise, by

* Probably the Orsini prince who was then Lord of Salerno.

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virtue of the favour aforesaid, always hereafter went about the city carrying arms, and divers of his companions did the same. Henceforth none of the catchpoles of the governor ever took upon themselves to seize their weapons, fearing always lest they should have put upon them another trick like the last. The governor, being well advised that he was now become a byword and laughing-stock in the place, felt as much regret that fate had ever led him to Salerno as he felt for having taken to himself a young damsel for a wife. Wherefore, on this account, or perhaps because he was stirred thereto by his excessive jealousy, he contrived to have granted to him the favour of changing his abode and going to Sarno, as soon as his time of office had expired. And after he had gone thither, either through his former illness, or by the fresh fatigues he underwent, or from some other cause, he fell sick, and in the course of a few days breathed his last. Therefore, his wife who grieved very little for his death, was left without children and with a good store of wealth; so she went back to her father's house forthwith. Moreover, she bore in mind the long and fervent love which the young doctor of laws had nourished for her, and she did not forget that bird of his which he kept in its cage. So, regarding herself as free, and a lady in her own right; she contrived in very discreet and cautious fashion that he should be introduced to her, and, being in no wise anxious to contract fresh nuptials, they both together repaired the loss of their time in the past, spending their days in the most blissful fashion as long as their lives endured.

MASUCCIO

I CAN call to mind that I have many times heard argued between wise and learned men the question with regard to vows of that sort which certain people are wont to make in this world during those times when adversity presses heavily upon them—vows which, through some failing or other, they are unable to carry out after-

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wards. In these discussions I have heard it maintained that these same vows may by the power and authority of the Pope be changed, both in respect to their form and their nature. Now for this same reason I am well assured that our doctor of laws, having had due instruction in this matter, and at the same time having been interdicted by the action taken in the case by the governor from letting fashion his own *ex voto* in wax and hanging up the same once every year before the shrine of the two sainted corpses aforesaid, was granted a dispensation which allowed him, in such a sacred cause, to substitute for the same an offering made after the manner of the flesh, in such fashion as men were wont to use in days past, not once a year, but many times a month, making their oblations in the holy temple of the valley of Jehoshaphat; peradventure so that they might be able to cite the same as more valid testimony in the day of judgment.

But now putting on one side jesting of every sort, I declare with all assurance that he who finds himself plagued with the two vicious infirmities above-named, to wit, avarice and jealousy, may indeed hold himself to be the most ill-starred of men, because, over and beyond the pricks which will without ceasing assault him within and never let his life be guided for one second by content, it often happens that he will meet disaster through the working of those troubles which he has always dreaded and shunned, seeing that all the subtle counsels and devices of thieves are laid so as to purloin cunningly from him who keeps the closest watch. And that I may expound the truth of the matter—over and beyond what I have said in the last three novels here set down—I will go on in a similar strain with my discourse, and will show in the next place a manifest example of this truth by means of what befell a certain old man of great wealth, avaricious and jealous beyond bounds. This same old wretch was at the same moment beggared of his honour, his goods, and his peace of mind, and, by reason of his jealousy, taken as if he had been a fish upon the well-baited hook.

THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Fourteenth

ARGUMENT

A CAVALIER OF MESSINA FALLS IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG NEAPOLITAN GIRL. HE LEARNS THAT HER FATHER IS VERY AVARICIOUS, WHEREFORE HE CONTRIVES TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH HIM, AND PUTS HIM IN THE WAY OF MAKING VAST GAIN IN TRAFFIC. AFTER A TIME HE PRETENDS THAT HE MUST NEEDS RETURN HOME, AND OFFERS TO LEAVE BEHIND HIM IN PAWN A SLAVE, THE SAID SLAVE BEING ONE WELL INSTRUCTED AS TO THE DEED HE HAD IN VIEW. THIS SLAVE, A WOMAN, BEGUILES THE YOUNG GIRL, AND THE TWO PLUNDER THE OLD FATHER AND TAKE TO FLIGHT IN COMPANY WITH THE LOVER. FINALLY THE CAVALIER MARRIES THE DAMSEL; THEY RETURN TO NAPLES, AND ARE HAPPY IN THEIR LOVE.

TO THE MOST EXCELLENT MESSER JACOBO SOLIMENA, PHYSICIAN OF SALERNO*

EXORDIUM

IN what degree that most envious and rapacious sin of avarice, with the detestable vices accompanying it, has spread itself over the entire universe, and in what fashion, when once it may have fixed its claws into a man, it seizes hold of and tears out of him every virtue he may possess, you, the new Æsculapius, will easily be able to judge by the aid of those rare abilities which you possess. And again, because I have not, as it seems to me, touched sufficiently hitherto upon the effects produced by jealousy, I am inclined, before passing on to other themes, to put on record my belief that this passion of jealousy is

* In "Tumulorum," Book II., Pontano refers to "Giacomo Solimene Medico."

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not always to be regarded as the result of excessive love; but verily and indeed in most cases may be set down as springing from extreme meanness of spirit, seeing that the greater part of jealous people are either old, or ugly, or impotent, or such chicken-hearted wretches that, whenever by chance they may see a man of a better outward seeming than their own, they regard him as one who would be able to give better satisfaction to their wives than they themselves can compass. And because from my earliest years I have ever known you to be of the number of magnanimous and liberal-minded men, as well as an excellent physician for the cure of every form of infirmity which may beset us, it has seemed good to me, at the same time that I give you intelligence as to the novel which follows, to implore you that, out of your great knowledge and resource, you will proffer to your own Masuccio wholesome remedies, and such as are fitted for the cure of the one passion and the other, in order that he, having duly received instruction from you, may with no mean authority hand down to posterity the fruits of your marvellous knowledge.

THE NARRATIVE

MESSER TOMMASO MARICONDA,* my grandfather and a kinsman of your own, was, as no doubt you know well, a very notable and elegant cavalier, and one who in his time was held in no small repute and esteem in this our city. Now this gentleman, when he was aged and full of years, took vast delight, as is the habit of old men, in telling to his listeners great numbers of very remarkable stories, all of which he would set forth with the most distinguished eloquence, and with the most marvellous memory. And amongst others I well remember to have heard him tell, when I was a very young child, as a real and undoubted fact, how, after the death of King Charles III.,† there arose in our kingdom

* The Mariconda were a noble family both in Naples and Salerno.

† Charles III. of Durazzo, who deposed and murdered Joanna

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grave and prolonged warfare provoked by the habitual tyranny of the house of Anjou. At this time there chanced to be in Naples a certain cavalier of the city of Messina, called by name Giuffredi Saccano, a man who was a vehement partisan of the house of Durazzo; and one day when, according to his habit, he was making a round of the city on horseback, he happened to espy at a window a very lovely young damsel, the daughter of an old man, a merchant, whose name at this moment I cannot rightly call to mind. Now, as he was beyond all measure delighted with her appearance, he found himself straightway inflamed with a violent passion for her, and, as the kindly fortune of both of them willed it, the young girl, whose name was Carmosina, perceived in her heart that she had found favour in the eyes of this gentleman. Although she had never before known what manner of thing love might be, and had scarcely ever set eyes on a man, the affair now came to a strange issue, and one almost unheard of before, inasmuch as one flame set those two hearts ablaze at one and the same moment. Indeed, they were both stricken therewith in such fashion that neither one nor the other could move from the spot. Nevertheless, after a certain time had passed, being drawn away by modesty and bashfulness, they parted one from another, though not without sorrow and regret on either side.

Whereupon Messer Giuffredi, being well assured how love had all on a sudden levelled two mortals to the earth with a single blow, and that nothing but the advent of some favourable opportunity was needed* to allow them to satisfy their sympathetic desires, gave himself up entirely, as is the habit of lovers, to the task of searching out who the maiden might be, and what was her parentage. At last he discovered who her father was, and learned besides that he was an old man inordinately jealous and avaricious, inasmuch as he was possessed by these vices even beyond the common measure of old age.

I., and was the father of Ladislas and Joanna II. The wars referred to were those waged by Margaret, his widow, on behalf of her son, against Louis of Anjou. Charles died in 1386.

* Orig., *e che altro che attitudine non gl' impediva.*

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Furthermore he ascertained that the miser, in order to escape the prayers of suitors to bestow his only daughter in marriage, was accustomed to keep her always closely shut up in the house, treating her the while worse than the meanest servant.

Now the cavalier, having thoroughly informed himself concerning the things written above, began to feign to be enamoured, now with one and now with another of the young women who dwelt near to the damsel's abode, so that he might be able to advance some colourable reason for betaking himself into that quarter, and at least gladdening his eyes with the sight of the walls which contained her, if he might not see her in person. When this became known he was set down by many of his friends as nothing better than one who fills himself with wind,* and his cunning sagacity was made a mock of by all the fools of the place. But he, caring naught for all this, and following resolutely the purpose he had framed, contrived to contract a close and intimate friendship with the damsel's father, who was engaged in the traffic of merchandize purchasing very often from the old man divers wares at a monstrous price, for which things he had no need whatever; and over and beyond this, in order to inveigle the miser still more, he would not fail to bring other clients every day into the warehouse, so that the old man made fresh profits without ceasing.

Seeing that the old merchant drew very great advantage from his traffic with the cavalier and his friends, he let grow up between himself and the young man so close a friendship and intimacy that all those who knew him were mightily astonished thereat. However, after a time the cavalier, being seized with the desire to bring his scheme to the end he had designed, found opportunity one day to shut himself up with the old merchant in the warehouse, whereupon he began to address him in the following words: "For the reason that I stand in need of counsel and help in my affairs, I feel that I cannot do better than have recourse to you, whom, on account of your goodness, I love and reverence as my own father. Wherefore I will

* Orig., *non altro che per un pascivento giudicato.*

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not hold back from laying bare all my secrets to you, and I will first let you know that, at a season now many years past, I left my father's house, and since that time I have been detained in this city on account of the love I bear to your king and of the circumstances of the war. And things have fared with me in such wise that, up to this present time, no chance has been offered to me of going back to my country. But now for several days past I have been urged by my father, who has sent many letters and messengers to me concerning this matter, that I should forthwith betake myself to see him once again before the season of his old age shall be sped. As I cannot refuse to hearken to these commands of his or to the voice of filial love, I have made up my mind to go to him straightway, and, after having tarried with him some short period, I intend at once to return hither, and to take up again my service under my lord the king. Now as I know of no one to whom I can more conveniently entrust my confidence on such an occasion than to you, I come to ask you whether you would be willing to take under your charge certain possessions of mine, and to keep the same for me till the time of my return. And above all this, the chief concern I feel is on account of a certain female slave of mine, one whom I am most unwilling and aggrieved to sell by reason of her worth and goodness. But, on the other hand, finding myself sorely beset by the lack of thirty ducats, and being kept back by my honour from requesting any friend of mine to make me a loan so trifling, I have determined, finding myself placed in this doubtful position, rather to take security of you alone in this business, and to give you the trouble to advance me the sum aforesaid, leaving in your hands the slave as a pledge for the same. If at any time before I shall return you may find an opportunity of selling her for the price of seventy ducats, which is the sum I gave for her, I will beg you to deal with her as if she were your own."

The old man, who in sooth was far more of a miser than of a sage, began to busy his brains in canvassing and considering what possible profit might come to him if he should consent to do the cavalier the service that was de-

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manded, and, without detecting aught therein of the nature of fraud or debating the affair further with himself, made answer in these words: "See here, Messer Giuffredi, the love which I bear towards you is so great, that I assuredly could never bring myself to answer no to any request you might make of me, supposing that the thing demanded lay within my power to perform, and for this reason I am strongly disposed to accommodate you with whatever sum of money you may want for your purposes. And besides this, I will keep the slave on your behalf, in order that you may not suffer ill through having to sell her. Then, when you shall have come back here safe and sound —supposing always that the slave should have done what was needed of her—I will settle my account with you in such fashion that you will find you could not have been better treated even if you had been my own son."

The cavalier, rejoicing greatly at the answer he received from the old man, then replied to him saying, "In sooth I did not expect any other answer from you, and it seems to me that to render you thanks therefor would be superfluous, but may our Lord God grant that I may be able to lay before you clearly the product of this our friendship to our common profit and advantage." And after he had thus brought his discourse to an end he took leave of the old man, and having mounted his horse according to his wont, he made his way along the street in which was the lodging of his lady-love; and, as he passed along, by the working of the fate which ruled the lives of the one and the other, he espied by chance the form of the damsel partially revealed at the casement of her chamber—a boon granted perchance for the satisfaction of both of them. Then drawing herself back from the window like one bewildered, she cast down upon him a sweet and piteous glance; whereupon he, looking cautiously around him and observing no one in the neighburhood, and conscious that he had no time to spare for the making of long speeches, said to her, "My Carmosina, be comforted, forasmuch as I have at last found a means by which I shall be able to deliver you from your prison." And having thus spoken he went his way, God speeding him.

Meantime the young damsel, who had understood quite

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clearly the purport of her lover's words, was in no small measure comforted therewith, and although it did not enter her head to hope that from such a speech could ensue any working which might make for her advantage, nevertheless, the bare hope roused in her breast thereby gave her heart, though she knew not wherefore. The cavalier, when he had returned to his house, called his slave into his presence and said, "My good Anna, the business which we discussed and arranged is already set in order, wherefore see that you prove wary and prudent in the affair which you will have to bring to pass." And although the slave was already well instructed in all the arts and methods she would be called upon to employ, nevertheless the cavalier caused her to rehearse several times afresh the concerted plan of their subtle stratagem.

When a few days had elapsed, and when he had set everything duly in order, the cavalier went once more to the old merchant and addressed him in the following words: "Alas! how irksome it is to me to withdraw myself for ever so limited a time from your friendship, which has been so precious and so profitable to me. Of this he who truly knows all our secrets will be a witness. Nevertheless, as it is convenient for my purpose that I should take my departure this very night, for the reason that all preparations for my passage are now complete, I have come hither to take my leave of you, and besides this to fetch the money which I begged you to advance me as a loan. Also I am come to bid you send for the chattel you wot of." The old man, who could have prayed God for nothing better, was overjoyed at this news, seeing that he had begun to feel some apprehension lest the cavalier might have repented him of his proposal. Whereupon, without further delay he counted out the thirty ducats, and, having done this, he sent to fetch the slave, who forthwith went to his house, taking with her certain small and delicate things which were the property of the cavalier.

Now when the evening was at last come, Messer Giuffredi, accompanied by the old merchant and certain others of his friends, betook himself to the seashore, and then, having embraced them all and bidden them farewell, he embarked on board a light galley which was about to set

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sail for Messina. But when the aforesaid ship had fared a short distance from the port of Naples, he made the shipmen place at his service a small boat (which matter in sooth he had already arranged with the captain), and in this he had himself conveyed to Procida.* Having come there, he found lodging in the house of a certain friend of his, and there he tarried until three days had passed. On the night of the third day, when the hour had come which he had appointed with the slave and with other associates of his, Sicilian fellows keen to act and well set towards any deed of dangerous adventure, he returned to Naples and made his way into the city in very cautious wise. Having come there, he took secret lodging, together with his associates, in a certain house hard by that of the old merchant—a dwelling which, through the ill times brought about by the wars, was at that period quite void of occupants, and there they all abode hidden and silent until the following day came.

In the meantime the cunning and quick-witted slave had gone to the merchant's house, and had there met with most friendly and joyful reception from Carmosina. The last named, knowing full well from whom the woman had come, in a brief space of time became on very intimate terms with her; whereupon the slave, spurred on by remembering how short was the time in which her purpose would have to be accomplished, laid bare to the damsel point by point the reasons for which she had come thither, using the while the most consummate arts and the most skilful discourse, and furthermore telling her exactly what her master had settled with her concerning the matter in question, and heartening the damsel little by little by the arguments she brought forward to carry out in daring fashion the enterprise to its issue, so as to secure for herself and her lover a lasting time of peace and happiness. The young girl, who for many reasons was even more strongly minded than the cavalier towards this end, did not suffer the slave to waste more time in adding one lengthy argument to another, but told her straightway that she was fully prepared to consent to every one of the proposals just made by her, and likewise to follow all the

* An island lying between Ischia and the mainland.

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directions laid down by the cavalier, whom she herself loved as she loved her own life.

To these words the slave replied: "My daughter, if it should happen that you have a few little things of your own which you would like to carry away with you, I would counsel you to get the same in order at once, seeing that our plan will have to be put in execution this very night. You must know also that my master and his servant and certain other companions of his are now concealed in the house next door to us. This fact I have learnt from a signal which I have this day seen displayed from the house in question, and, as you well know, it would be an easy task to get into it from our paved courtyard." When the young girl heard how short was the time before her flight, she gave the slave a hundred kisses, and told her that she possessed nothing of her own, either great or small, which she could take away with her, but that she had made up her mind to abstract from the store of her avaricious old father a much greater sum of money than anyone could have reckoned sufficient for her dowry.

When they had brought the matter to this conclusion, and when the midnight hour had come, and the old man and everyone else in the house were fast asleep, Carmosina and the slave broke open a chest and took out therefrom jewels and money of a value exceeding one thousand five hundred ducats, and, having bestowed these safely away, they silently crossed over the courtyard and came to the spot where the cavalier was awaiting them. He, with the greatest joy, took the young girl in his arms and covered her lips with ardent kisses. Further pleasure they did not enjoy, seeing how precarious was their present abiding-place; wherefore the whole company set out on their way, and took the road which led to the seashore. Having cautiously issued from the city through a breach in the wall behind the slaughter-houses, they found their bark ready armed and fully equipped for a swift passage, and ready to cast off at a moment's notice. Whereupon they all went on board the same, and, having dipped their oars in the water, they found themselves at Ischia before many hours had elapsed. Then the cavalier and all those accompanying him presented themselves before the lord

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of that place, who chanced to be a particular friend of Messer Giuffredi, and one indeed who had been made privy to the whole affair. From this gentleman they all received most kindly and hospitable reception, and while they were abiding there the lovers, deeming that they were now upon safe ground, partook of the first and sweetest delights of their reciprocal love, and rejoiced the one as well as the other with no less joy over the circumstances of their flight.

In the meantime the old father, when the daylight came, first found that neither his daughter nor the slave whom he had taken in pledge were in the house, and then became aware that he had been robbed of his money and of his jewels to boot, and for the last-named loss he felt no less grief than for the first; indeed, how sore were his tears and lamentations each one may judge for himself. Moreover, no one need wonder to hear that he found his affliction so sharp and cruel that he was over and over again fain to hang himself by the neck therefor. And thus, overcome by his losses and the shame that had been put upon him, he spent his days in continual weeping shut up in his house.

Meantime the enamoured couple in Ischia lived their lives in the greatest delight, and by reason of their constant intercourse it came to pass that the fair damsel became with child. Which thing, when the cavalier came to know it, caused him the greatest delight, and he forthwith made a resolve to treat her with a worthy spirit of generosity, and at the same time to give full satisfaction to God, to the world, and to himself. Wherefore, having despatched a message through the intervention of the lord of Ischia to the father of Carmosina and to divers of his own kinsfolk, these aforesaid all came to Ischia, and, when they were all there assembled, and after certain contracts had been duly signed, the cavalier, by the favour of the king and with the universal approval and general rejoicing of the people of Naples, took Carmosina for his lawful wife. Thus, having exchanged the secret sport of Venus for the career of married folk, they went back to their Neapolitan home and passed their days in great happiness as long as they both lived. In this manner it may be seen how the jeal-

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ous, miserly, and foolish old man atoned for the deed after all the damage had been done.

MASUCCIO

THE fortunate ending which I have let ensue to the story I have just completed will, I make little doubt, give cause to many of those who may read the same to hold up for approbation with unbounded praises the great foresight and sagacity of the young girl, who, marking how she was thus kept in this wretched plight and held to be meaner than the meanest hireling, contrived to procure for herself so seemly and valiant a lover; and, besides this, to obtain out of the hoard of her miserly old father a greater sum of money than would have been given to her as a dower, becoming in the end the wife of her lover with honour and happiness. Now the things above written, although in sooth they may be laid less to her charge than to that of Love, who awakened her slumbering wits and thereby taught her how to bring to an issue with the greatest courage those lessons which he himself had taught her, I for my part do not intend to praise, nor do I intend to advise any woman, however lavish may be the promises of her lover, to imitate Carmosina in this matter, and suffer herself to be carried away in such fashion. For, admitting that the issue of the affair was a fortunate one for our Carmosina, it must nevertheless be borne in mind that the tempers of men are not all of the same quality and inclination, and that the course of action which the cavalier followed, urged thereto by his innate goodness and uncommon virtue, may perchance be censured as faulty and poor-spirited by others, who are so minded that, if they should find themselves in a similar case, would plume themselves upon having done a valiant deed of prowess when they should have robbed their sweethearts of the flower of their virginity and afterwards left them in scorn to their disgrace. And even though each individual girl should feel well assured that in her own case the end must needs be a fortunate one, I still judge that she would be

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taking the wiser part who might follow a course opposite to that adopted by Carmosina, forasmuch as it is by far better never to put oneself in peril of meeting ruin at the hands of another, than to escape the danger though running near the precipice.*

And furthermore I am persuaded that it is a fact to be controverted by no one that the inordinate suspicion combined with the senile avarice of the old merchant were the real causes of the flout that was put upon him, and of the heavy loss which accompanied it. If afterwards there followed a reparation of the same in the creditable issue of the matter, it was assuredly not because the execrable vices of the old man did not exhibit their poisonous results, which results seem to me so monstrous and horrible that I am driven, out of sheer confusion, to cease to talk of them. And, for the reason that in the novel which I will next let follow it will behove me to treat of things greatly differing from, and even exactly opposite to this suspicious humour, I will for a season give over all discourse concerning this mean imperfection, and, still holding myself in the company of Madonna Avarice, I will exhibit to you the execrable conduct of a greedy, avaricious loon, by the means of which discourse you will be able to comprehend clearly how such a vice may become master of a man's understanding, and rob him of all virtue, honour, and content.

* Orig., *che presso il pericolo non periclitare.*

THE END OF THE FOURTEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Fifteenth

ARGUMENT

A LORD CARDINAL IS ENAMOURED OF A CERTAIN LADY, AND BRIBES THE HUSBAND OF THE SAME WITH A SUM OF MONEY, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY LET HIS WIFE BE BROUGHT INTO THE CARDINAL'S APARTMENT. ON THE MORROW THE HUSBAND COMES TO TAKE HER BACK, BUT THE LADY BEING VASTLY CONTENTED WITH HER PRESENT LODGMENT, REFUSES TO ACCOMPANY HIM, THOUGH HE URGES HER THERETO WITH MUCH FRUITLESS DISCOURSE. IN THE END HE TAKES THE MONEY WHICH WAS PROMISED TO HIM, AND IN DESPAIR GOES INTO EXILE, WHILE HIS WIFE LIVED A PLEASANT LIFE WITH THE CARDINAL.

TO THE MOST WORSHIPFUL MESSER ANTONIO DA BOLOGNA PANORMITA*

EXORDIUM

ONLY because there comes over me a desire to write to you, most famous and illustrious poet, the light and glory of our Italian nation, my wit and my tongue, my hand and my pen, seem, as it were, to be so confusedly involved the one with the other that no one of them can or will return to its accustomed duties. Nevertheless, I am inspired with new confidence to catch up my weapons from the ground, and am heartened to address to you the novel which I send herewith, when I call to mind how I have seen you on divers occasions take no

* Antonio Beccadelli was born in 1394 at Palermo, and was afterwards named from his birthplace, Il Panormita. He was educated at Siena, where he had for a fellow-student Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, and ultimately became one of the leading humanists of the time. He went first as professor of history to Milan, at the invitation of Filippo Maria Visconti, and later on became secretary to Alfonso the Magnanimous. He was also tutor to Prince Ferdinand, afterwards king, and died in 1471.

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little pleasure in listening to the undisciplined variations and the coarse speech of the common people, and thrust aside, in favour of these, writings in the most elegant and meritorious style, as if no masterpiece of lofty rhetoric could ever excite or command the admiration of you, who are our new Apollo, or lead you to take pleasure therein. In the course of reading this novel you will be told of a very strange contract and a very unusual act of barter made between a certain Mantuan, who was in sooth a foolish blockhead, and one of our new Pharisees. This latter, deeming that he peradventure might one day win for himself the succession to the chair of the glorious Peter, and being in no wise disposed to allow the chief pastorate of the Church to fall into the hands of men of outland nations, desired rather that the same should remain fixed in those of his own descent, wherefore he did his best to beget children of his own. And as with a certain show of authority these cardinals have come to wear the crimson mantle and hat in remembrance of the red blood of Christ which was sprinkled upon the wood of the Cross, so in like manner they affirm that it is lawful for them to have children of their own on the strength of that other text in which God said, "Crescite et multiplicanimi." But for the reason that my falcon does not essay a flight high enough to assail the life and the carriage of such as these, will not stop to censure them in this place, but will at once go on to tell the story which I promised you.

Panormita was a voluminous writer of the smooth and polished Latin verse so fashionable in his day, but his name is chiefly remembered in connection with the authorship of the "Hermaphroditus," a poem obscene enough to incur even the censure of Poggio. There is a story told of him, to illustrate his enthusiasm for the classics, how he sold a farm in order to purchase a MS, of Livy. His books were condemned and forbidden by the church and the Minor Friars; Bernardino da Siena and Roberto de Lecce publicly burned the "Hermaphroditus," and the author's portrait as well. In spite of ecclesiastical censure Panormita enjoyed the patronage and friendship of the Emperor Sigismond, Alfonso of Naples, and Cosmo di Medici (he dedicated to the last named the "Hermaphroditus") and of many scholars—Guarino and Poggio amongst them—who were fascinated by his elegant style, while condemning the licentiousness of his subjects.

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THE NARRATIVE

I BELIEVE that it is a thing well known throughout the universe, how that most blessed Pope Pius II. let summon and constitute a sacred and general council in the city of Mantua,* in order to set on foot an expedition to be undertaken by all the Christian powers against the Turk. Now the Pope having gone thither accompanied by his whole college of cardinals, awaited the gathering together of the princes and potentates of Christendom whom he had summoned thither in order that he might give his directions concerning all the needful preparations which he was persuading them to adopt for the carrying out of so noble an emprise. It chanced that there was amongst the others a certain lord cardinal, concerning whose name and dignity I will keep silence,† who, although he had not yet passed out of his flowering youth to the age which comes after, was nevertheless charged with the execution of the more weighty offices of the apostolic court. In addition to this, he had been endowed by nature with a most comely presence. I will not linger now to tell of the sumptuous apparel he used, or of his fine and richly-decked horses, or of the honourable troop of gentlemen who were in his train, or of the magnificence of his kingly manner of life. And what shall I say concerning his magnanimous spirit, which, being endowed with every liberal virtue, was vastly unlike that of all the others, and in time became most saintly and gracious through its abundance of every grace and gentleness; so that in the end he was accounted to be the most seemly and affable gentleman to be found in any of the chief places of Christendom?

* In 1459.

† Signor Settembrini puts forward a theory that this cardinal may have been Roderico Borgia, afterwards Alexander VI. He was raised to the purple by Calixtus III., his uncle, in 1456, as Cardinal of Valenza; and Summonte, "Storia Napoli," lib. v., p. 246, says, while treating of the Council of Mantua, "il Cardinal di Valenza restò con grandi entrate, e vicecancelliere della sede apostolica."

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It happened that this same cardinal took up his abode in a palace belonging to a citizen of repute, round about which there dwelt a vast number of ladies marvellously beautiful in person, and amongst these there was one who, without doubt, outdid all the others of the city in beauty; and she, as fate would have it, was more than once observed by the lord cardinal aforesaid, who thereupon felt that he could take pleasure in her and in her alone. Like the mighty hunter that he was, he was powerfully attracted by this fair booty, and determined to leave nothing undone which might help him to come out of this enterprise a victor. And because the house where the young woman dwelt was very near to his own, and the windows opposite to each other, he found on this account abundant opportunity of gazing upon her, and of admiring her loveliness at his convenience.

Now because he received information after a time that this lady was more modest and virtuous than any of her neighbours, and because he found himself unable to induce her to look upon him even once with kindly eyes, while he used all kinds of gracious arts to commend himself to her favour, he began to feel that the hopes he had hitherto cherished were beginning to forsake him. Still, being fiercely urged on by the pricks of love, and knowing well that difficult undertakings are not to be brought to an issue without sore travail; remembering, likewise, that those objects which men attain with ease have but small savour and quickly pall, he at last fixed upon a certain scheme after he had well canvassed divers others. He determined to see whether he might not be able to entrap the husband of the lady aforesaid by his love of gold, knowing as he did that this man was very needy and very avaricious at the same time. Thus the husband, having been summoned, without any farther delay went to him forthwith, and was at once conducted into the presence of the lord cardinal in his chamber. After having welcomed him with many words of civil and familiar greeting, the cardinal made him sit down beside him, and then addressed him in these words: "Sir, as I well know you to be a man of prudent nature, it does not seem to me to be in any way necessary that I should use lengthy speeches

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and persuasive reasonings in making clear to you a certain matter which you may easily perceive to be one which must make for your lasting peace and contentment, and at the same time enable you to escape both from your present troubles and from those which await you in the future. Wherefore I must let you know that the charm of the great beauty of your most virtuous wife has seized upon me in such wise that I can find for myself no rest on account of the same. I know well enough that by no forethought or reasoning can I bring forward any plea which would permit me to require such a service at the hands of yourself, who are her husband; but when I considered how, for reasons of affection and of upright dealing as well, no other person would be able to set this affair in order so well as you, or to keep the same a secret from all ears, I made up my mind to have recourse to you, rather than to any other trusty agent, to act as a go-between on my behalf in the matter aforesaid, begging you that for the sake of giving me the satisfaction I so much desire, and for the gathering into your own pockets such advantageous profit, you will deign to grant me this boon which I long for so earnestly. And although the thing I speak of is of so great value and worth that I cannot be said to buy it, nevertheless you must understand that this service I ask of you will not have been given to me for nothing, but sold at a very high price, seeing that I desire no other thing than that your wife should forthwith take full possession of myself and you of all my wealth. Now if it seems good to you to do this thing, I beg you to tell me so without delay and not keep me waiting, in order that you may straightway perceive what will be the consequences of all the bounty and the rewards which I intend to bestow upon you."

The worthy man was, as I have before said, poor, and besides this avaricious beyond measure; wherefore, when he listened to the magnificent offers made to him by the cardinal, whom he knew well to be very rich and very liberal likewise, he at once considered that assuredly a very great profit must accrue to him from this business, and at the same time persuaded himself most confidently that with his craft he would be able to lay the plot in marvel-

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lously subtle and secret fashion. In sooth, the things afore-mentioned sufficed amply to confound his wits, to break through the respect he ought to have felt for the matrimonial tie, to lead him to hold cheaply the good opinion of the world, and to injure with such a disgraceful blow both himself and his eternal happiness. Therefore, without letting his thoughts busy themselves longer over the affair, he made answer to the cardinal in a few words: "Monsignor, I hold myself in readiness to do this service you require of me, for the reason that it is your part to command and mine to fulfill your every wish and pleasure."

When the husband had thanked the cardinal many times for his bounty, he took his leave with a joyous countenance, and, in order to let no long delay interpose before the business should be set in progress, be began on the following night to canvass the same in a very roundabout fashion with his wife, shielding himself as often as he needed behind the pretext of their pressing poverty, concluding his speech by affirming that a dishonest action, if it should be wrought in such cunning wise that no one might be cognisant thereof, may be held not to have been committed at all. The wife, who was a very discreet woman, not only took this discourse of his in excessive ill part, but likewise, being hotly inflamed with anger thereanent, she poured out upon him the vilest abuse, ending by declaring that, if at any future time he should allow himself to think of such a matter, and much less to speak of it, she would without further paltering make it known to her brothers.

The husband did not trouble himself greatly because his wife made so haughty a reply the first time he spoke to her of the affair; and, when he had allowed a few days to pass by, and when a moment fitted for his purpose seemed to have recurred during a conversation with his wife over divers pleasant things, he once more preferred to her in well-considered fashion the same request as he had made to her before. Whereupon she, showing herself more inflexible than ever, went forthwith to the house of her brothers, and with great displeasure told them the whole story of her husband's vile doings, and these, as

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soon as they heard what she had to tell, were greatly angered and caused their brother-in-law to come to them and let him know what things they had heard concerning him, threatening him sorely and casting foul words at him on account of the misdeeds he had planned against the honour of them all.

But he, who had already pondered over and prepared the answer he was minded to give, said, without aught of amazement, and even smiling somewhat, "Good brothers of mine, of a truth you might have made inquiry of me with more decorum, and then I might well have taken away all your suspicions, but since one is forced to endure all manner of things when dealing with a number of others joined in alliance, I will tell you the truth concerning the matter which your sister and my wife has related to you. Wherefore you must understand that I, having become suspicious that the cardinal, who has his lodgings over against ours, was seized with an amorous passion for her, and furthermore that he, by the help of certain of my household, had secretly woven a plot against me, made up my mind to try a final experiment in respect to her, holding her, young and fair as she is, to be an honest woman, what though I am somewhat uncertain as to the chastity of women in general. Then, if she should be found honest, as I have always found her, I resolved to praise her thereanent, and to withdraw myself from all suspicious mood both in the present and for the future as well. If, on the contrary, I should have discovered in her any falling away from virtuous carriage, I should have set myself, with your concurrence, to give her such usage as might be meet for her deserts. But now, for the reason that I have, by God's mercy, ascertained and proved her virtue, as you see for yourselves, I have let vanish from my mind all suspicion of any kind, old or new, and from this time forth I shall be careful to treat her with still greater consideration than heretofore."

The brothers, after they had lent ear to this excuse thus set forth in plausible wise, gave the husband high commendation for the prudent arguments he had used with himself, deeming it quite possible that he might in sooth have done this thing in consideraton of the end he antici-

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pated, and, after some further discourse over the affair, they brought about a reconciliation between him and his wife; whereupon she consented to go back with him to his house, holding the belief that he would not again begin to speak to her of such matters as he had lately been in the habit of discussing. The lord cardinal, when intelligence was brought to him of what had happened, listened to the same with great bitterness of spirit, for it seemed to him that his glowing hopes were beginning to lose their warmth. Nevertheless, coerced by the fierce passion which possessed him, he still went on courting her with glances more amorous and fervent than ever, and would, now by certain signs and now by spoken words, make offer to her of everything he possessed in the world without imposing upon her restraint or condition of any sort, letting her know in conclusion that for the sake of the love he had for her he was letting himself consume like ice in the rays of the sun.

Now the lady, in sooth, was made of metal which in no way differed from that out of which the residue of the female sex is compounded; wherefore she, notwithstanding that she was in every sense a virtuous and honest woman, began to be conscious of some little tenderness towards him on account of the continual hammering he kept up, but she was careful at the same time to let him get no inkling of her change of mind. Still she never neglected, whenever she might be holding conversation with her husband, to heap commendation beyond measure upon the circumspect manner and the praiseworthy carriage of the lord cardinal. Wherefore this discourse of hers chanced to become the reason for the wretched knave of a husband to pluck up his heart afresh, and to come back once more to ply her with the arguments and persuasions he had used before. Thus, having been careful to seize upon a certain time when he knew her to be in a friendly mood, he addressed her in these words: "My Giacomina, you yourself can truthfully bear witness of the fact that, both in the past and at this present time, I have cordially and truly loved you and still love you on account of the many virtues with which you are adorned. Now if the day before yesterday I demanded of you a certain

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thing you wot of, I should be unwilling indeed you should still hold the belief that this request of mine was produced by any want of esteem or respect for yourself. Indeed, I was urged on to beg this favour of you against my own pleasure and inclination by two very powerful reasons. The first of these is found in the extreme necessity which has fallen upon us through the working of our evil fortune —an ill for which we are ourselves in no way to blame, and which does not let me see that there is available any other method by which we may keep ourselves alive. The other, which in sooth afflicts me with grief no less bitter, is the thought that in the approaching festival which our marchioness is minded to give for the entertainment of all the various princes who are now gathered together here in our city, and to our neighbours as well, I shall not be able, through lack of money, to provide for your appearance at the same time in such gear and fashion as I should desire, and such as is fitting to our position and to your fine presence and beauty. Thus, when I consider these things in my mind, I find in them such great force, that I suffer myself to be borne along by their arguments, not only to let ensue the affair I named to your hearing, but even to consent to be haled off to eternal torture and a cruel death. And, forsooth, nothing but the fear of consequent shame keeps us back from doing this. Still, as I told you once before, no enterprise when it is undertaken with caution and foresight can ever come home to us to our prejudice or disgrace. In order that you may be assured that I am speaking the truth, I would have you see that this lord cardinal is so keenly sensible of his own honour and of ours as well that, albeit he is pining away by reason of his passion, he could not bring himself to take any other living man into his confidence as to this affair save myself, seeing that I am the one most concerned in keeping it a secret. Now therefore, not knowing of any farther consideration which I might suggest to you concerning this affair, I will bring my words to an end by saying that you must do what your soul counsels you to do, and then I, on my part, will of a surety be contented. Still I will not fail to remind you now, that hereafter, in the hours when we shall be tormented by our wretched

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poverty, we shall have to let our complaint be made, not to fortune, but to you."

In this fashion was the lady urged and persuaded without ceasing by her wretch of a husband, who, by these fraudulent arguments of his, led her on towards the verge of the abyss. And beyond this she, being fully persuaded that she was loved above everything else in the world by such a gracious, rich, handsome and liberal gentleman, made up her mind that, for the aforesaid reasons and many others to boot, she would forthwith break loose from all the bonds of virtue which had hitherto restrained her, and at one and the same time gain for herself the lasting gratification of her desires, and let her husband feel the prick of that punishment which he was bringing upon himself. And when she marked that he kept silence, she addressed him in these words: "My husband, since it seemed good to my brothers not only to give me to you for your wife in the first instance, but likewise to send me back again to your house contrary to my will after I had departed thence, having just and ample reason for what I did, and, seeing that we are as we are, I dare not and cannot dispose of myself otherwise than in such manner as all other beautiful women use in dealing with their husbands: By this I mean that we must submit ourselves to our husbands, and obey them as our superiors in all matters: Therefore, as I see clearly that you have in your mind a set purpose to let this person of mine be defiled in the embraces of another man, I will submit in peace to do what you will; that same thing which you have persuaded me to assent to with so many pleas and arguments. Thus I am now fully prepared to do your bidding when and in whatsoever manner you may ordain. Nevertheless, I will not omit to give you warning that it behoves you to give this affair mature reflection, and I will bid you take care, my husband, that you do not repent thereof in that season when there will remain for you no opportunity of remedying the same."

The husband, when he heard his wife answer in this unusual strain, was mightily pleased, and, deeming that his words had indeed borne fruit, said to her: "My wife, know that people never repent of what is done after due

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forethought and in order. However, you may safely leave the consideration of all this to me." And with these words he went out of her presence and betook himself with all speed to the cardinal, and, having given him salutation with a joyful face, thus addressed him: "My lord, the affair is set in order for this very night; but I have assuredly met with a hard task in making her say 'yes,' and I have besides promised her three hundred ducats for this first visit, and of this sum she has instant need in order to exchange the same for fine clothes and ornaments for her person, wherewith to deck herself at the festival which is about to be holden. Wherefore I beg you let it be your special care to send her home well contented."

The amorous lord cardinal, who nevertheless was well experienced and very circumspect, understood at once that the baseness of this fellow was as great as he could wish, and made answer that not only would he with the utmost pleasure hand over to him the three hundred ducats, which sum indeed he looked upon as a mere trifle, but that he wished him to have as much money as his pockets would hold. And then, after divers other kindly and courteous words, they came to an agreement one with the other as to the time and the manner in which the husband himself should conduct the lady into the cardinal's lodging. And when he had returned to his wife he set forth to her an account of what he had settled for her to do, but he could not get her to make any reply thereto save saying, "My husband, my husband, think over and consider well what thing it is you do." And when the appointed time had come for them to set forth she still kept on carping at him as they went on their way with the same discourse: "My husband, I greatly fear me you will repent of what you are after." But he, thinking the while of naught besides the three hundred ducats which he would win for himself in so short a space of time, troubled himself very little thereanent, and even less did he understand the drift of these words of hers, seeing that the passion of avarice had in no small degree blurred and darkened his understanding, and in this wise he led his wife to the cardinal.

When the young woman had come into the chamber,

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and when she found herself in the loving arms of so gracious a gentleman, who, besides kissing her times out of number, caressed her over and over again in a fashion which proved the sincerity of his affection, she was seized with the desire, even before they had come to taste together the delicious fruits of love, to confirm herself in the purpose she had already formed, that is, to submit to die rather than to go back to that worthy husband of hers. Then, when the lord cardinal had given to the husband polite dismissal, and had bidden him to return betimes in the morning and take back his wife with him, he entered the soft and luxurious bed with the young woman, and when they had come to that juncture in which love holds out to us his supreme consolation, they wandered all that night in the delightful gardens of Venus overcome by mutual desire. So that the lady, who had never hitherto tasted such a dainty repast, thought within herself that she must assuredly have come to the place where alone the highest bliss was to be found. And for the reason that she had no desire to depart from where she was, she, with discreet manner and with fitting words, made known to the lord cardinal what were her wishes, and what course would be expedient for them to take to secure their common contentment and satisfaction, saying in conclusion that, if he should not be satisfied to keep her with him, he might for the future think of her and set her down as lost entirely, and of her husband as being still bereft of her, for she had determined never to return to him.

The lord cardinal, who had never before had sense of such sweetness as flowed from these words of hers, and from the purport thereof, before he made her any reply gave her some earnest of his intentions by the many sweet and loving kisses he showered upon her, and at last addressed her in these words: "Sweet soul of mine, in sooth I know of naught else to say to you save that, because I have given to you my very soul, and because you have given your beautiful and delicate body to me, you have only to command and to dispose of me in any fashion which may seem good to you. Whatever you may ordain, I shall be content therewith." Then, after he had

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turned to her and kissed her again, he bade her get up and put on her attire, seeing that it was by this time broad daylight, and when this was done he let her be conducted into another room. Having heard that the husband had been there since the dawn in readiness to take his wife with him back to his house, the cardinal bade a servant bring him hither. The husband, after he had come into the room and seen his wife there, and given her good morning with a smiling face went privily up to her side and spake to her in the following words: "Ah, my Giacomina, know that I indeed sorely repent me for having brought you to this place, forasmuch as never before have I endured such bitter grief as I have endured this accursed night, wherein I have not been able to sleep at all through thinking of you." The lady, who had already got in order the reply she was minded to give, then said to him: "My husband, I too have been full of regrets, but my regret has been that I did not say 'yes' the first time you proposed that I should come hither, seeing that for the rest of my life-time I shall never be able to make up for all those delicious nights which I have lost. And if, forsooth, you have slept badly, have I not also been kept awake, albeit most pleasantly, for the reason that my lord here has treated me to more caresses during this one single night than you have bestowed upon me during the whole time I have been your wife. Again I see quite well that through my ill luck in having such a husband as you, this gentleman's liberality, concerning which you discoursed to me in such an ardent tone, has been conferred upon me more than two thousandfold, for you must know that this morning when I made known to him my final resolve to remain entirely with him, he handed over to me at once the keys of all his treasures. And for this reason take whenever you like the price for which you bargained away the honour of our relationship one with the other, and assuredly I wish that this same matter may be the last venture you undertake with regard to me or to any other affair of mine, seeing that I would vastly prefer to let myself be torn in four quarters rather than return to you."

The wretch of a husband, who now indeed was fain to

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believe that the very heavens were falling down about his head, answered her in these words: "Giacomina, my fairest one, do you mean to mock me, or are you indeed speaking the truth?" She answered him, "Yes, certes, I make a mock of you, and with good cause, too. But you perhaps have made yourself believe that I am now minded to make a trial of your love, after the fashion by which, as you told my brothers, you once sought to put my constancy to the proof. Now I wish that, having made this trial of yours once for all, you should rest satisfied with the result of your essay, and that for the future you should look to have nothing further to do with me or my affairs. In sooth, you ought to remember how many times I said to you, 'My husband, have a care of what you are doing,' and to these words of mine you always made answer that I was to leave all such considerations to you. Wherefore I acted in this wise, and thus I intend to act for the future. The thought which gave rise to this thing was your own, and sprang from no other brain than yours, so find a remedy therefor if you can. I, for my part, shall in the meantime, without wasting a single thought over the matter, find myself becoming ever more beautiful and fresh in the delightful embraces of my new lord."

Having spoken these words she opened a cabinet and drew therefrom a purse into which she had shortly before counted the sum of three hundred ducats, and said to her husband, "Here, take the price for the wife you held in such light esteem, and tarry here not a moment longer." Then, as she moved away, to go into another room she said, "Now, good-bye, my husband, and another time consider well the thing you would do." Then she locked the door upon him, and never more as long as he lived was a sight of her granted to him. The wretched husband failing to find remedy of any sort for this disastrous barter of his, took the three hundred ducats, so as to make the best of a bad bargain, and overflowing with tears and sighs returned to his home, but being no less terrified by the fury of his brothers-in-law than overwhelmed by the burden of his own shame, he shortly after fled therefrom. How the lady fared, and how she

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spent the residue of her days in joyance and pleasure, anyone may easily understand.

MASUCCIO

IT might be looked upon as a rash and presumptuous deed on the part of any man who should set to work to visit with condemnation this young Mantuan lady on account of what she did for the chastisement of her base wretch of a husband, and for the securing for herself of a life of lasting pleasure, or to blame her because she showed herself indisposed to abandon those many delights, the existence of which she had discovered all unexpectedly and even against her will—delights which perchance had been foreordained as her portion from the very beginning of time. At the same time no one could or ought to feel any pity for the deceived husband, seeing that he himself purchased the befooling he got at his own price. In like manner, too, no one can with justice lay blame on the cardinal because he did not shut the door in the face of kindly fortune when she placed in his hands that one thing which he desired more than aught else in the world. Nay, it seems to me that we should rather hold him to be praised, in that, after having satisfied his desire with her, he did not allow himself to be conquered by avarice so as to withhold from the good easy husband the money he had covenanted to give him, as in sooth many others might have done.*

But now, seeing that we have spoken enough concerning all of these, and that there is no cause for us to wonder at the fact that men cannot always defend themselves from the snares which are set for them by others, I will in another novel let you hear of a most subtle cheat put upon one who was a saint by two of our Salernitan townsman, and in what fashion they contrived to extract many hundreds of florins out of the pockets of the wary people of Florence.

* Masuccio seems here to show that he has one law for a cardinal and another for a mendicant friar.

THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Sixteenth

ARGUMENT

SAN BERNARDINO* IS TRICKED BY TWO SALERNITANS, ONE OF WHOM MAKES THE SAINT BELIEVE THAT HE HAS FOUND A PURSE CONTAINING FIVE HUNDRED DUCATS, WHILE THE OTHER AFFIRMS THAT HE HAS LOST THE SAME, AND BY GIVING A DESCRIPTION OF ITS CONTENTS RECOVERS THE PURSE. WHEREUPON THE SAINT, HAVING IN A SERMON OF HIS MADE MENTION OF THE POVERTY OF THE FIRST-NAMED MAN TO THE FLORENTINE PEOPLE, COLLECTS A LARGE SUM OF MONEY, WHICH HE HANDS OVER TO THE KNAVE, WHO, HAVING FOREGATHERED ONCE MORE WITH HIS COLLEAGUE, DIVIDES WITH HIM THE BOOTY.†

TO MY MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND VERY REVEREND LORD, DON JOHN OF ARAGON‡

EXORDIUM

I MIND me, my illustrious and most reverend lord, that I have many a time determined within myself that I would dedicate to you, before making an end of my story-telling, a novel which should be full of divert-

* San Bernardino was born at Massa-Carrara in 1380, of noble family. He was trained for high office in the church, but in 1404 was moved by the vice and degradation he saw around him, to give up all thought of the career of wealth and ease which had been chosen for him, to sell all he had, and become a preaching Franciscan. For forty-two years he preached without ceasing in every part of Italy. In Florence he anticipated Savonarola's "bonfire of vanities," and vast crowds of listeners in Perugia were converted. He began to work for the reform of his order as soon as he joined it, seeing that the rule had grown very lax, and in 1438 became vicar-general. Afterwards he founded the Observantist branch of the Franciscans. He died in 1444, and was canonized by Nicholas V. in 1450.

† In the "Epoca" of Madrid, January 15, 1884, there is an account of a trick somewhat like the one dealt with in this novel.

‡ He was the third son of Ferdinand I. by Isabella da Chiaromonte. He was born in 1456, and became a cardinal in 1478. He died in 1485.

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ing and seemly incident—to you as the highest ornament and bright particular mirror of those who follow in the footsteps of Peter, and afterwards to write down the same and include it amongst the others already written. And for the reason that I am wishing to carry the project aforenamed into effect, I now send you this novel which I have recently set down, one which you will find no less true than it is diverting. In the same, moreover, you will be led to understand how, not only men of the world, but also those who are rated as saints can be tricked, and indeed often are tricked in their lifetime here on earth by those who go about under the mask of feigned righteousness.

THE NARRATIVE

ANGELO PINTO,* one of our Salernitan citizens, must in his day have been, according to what old men who knew him affirm, a most renowned master in the art of cheating others by means of every different sort of knavery, so that, if you had searched all Italy through, you would not have found his peer.† Wherefore this said man, after he had made quest in divers parts of Italy, both within and without, and had employed his tools to good service in almost every place, betook himself at last to Florence during that very same time when our most holy San Bernardino was preaching there—a time when indeed the greater part of the dwellers in Tuscany were running after the saint aforesaid, on account of the many and manifest miracles which he worked without ceasing, and of the fame which was noised abroad in public concerning his perfect manner of life.

Now, mixed with the vast multitude who were listening to the saint's preaching, the aforesaid Angelo met one day by chance another young fellow, also a Salernitan,

* According to Signor Settembrini the family of this name still survives in Salerno.

† The Salernitans had a reputation for being clever knaves. The men of Sorrento, on the other hand, were proverbial dullards. See Novel IV.

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called by name Il Vescovone, who, taking into consideration his age, was marvellously well learned in the arts which Angelo Pinto practised. When these two recognized one another, and called back to remembrance the city from which they both of them sprang, they exchanged many caresses and embraces, and set about relating a good part of the adventures which had befallen each one of them. At last, while they were conversing, Il Vescovone said: "My Angelo, you must know that I tarry here in Florence so that I may be able to put into execution a marvellously fine trick I know of; but, up to this present time, I have not been able to light upon any man in whom I could put full trust, and who might be the master of a few hundred florins."* Whereupon, after the young man had duly set forth the method of this trick of his, and after Angelo had highly approved of the same, the latter made answer and said that he was quite prepared to play his part in so noteworthy a cheat as he found this to be, and to lend his aid in the form of money and of all the cunning he possessed.

Thereupon, so as not to let any further delay stand in the way of this plan of theirs, they procured a very big satchel, having divers small pockets within side, and into this they put five hundred golden ducats—which was all that remained to Angelo out of a much greater sum, the residue of which he had expended—carefully separating the Venetian ducats from those of Florence. Besides this they divided all the other coins, according to the stamp which they bore, and placed each lot in a separate pocket; and then, having taken an exact account of them and written down a memorandum of the same on a piece of paper, Il Vescovone put this away carefully so as to have it at hand when it might be wanted. This done, they rehearsed together the scheme which they had agreed to carry out.

On the following morning, Angelo, having put on the disguise of a pilgrim, and with the satchel concealed in the breast of his mantle, went to the preaching, and when San Bernardino had come to the end of his sermon and had withdrawn to his cell, the feigned pilgrim followed

* Orig., *che sia forte di qualche centinaro di fiorini.*

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him thither closely and threw himself down at his feet, begging him of his charity to grant a compassionate hearing, seeing that the matter he had in hand was one which brooked no delay. Whereupon San Bernardino made answer in benignant wise, and said that he was fully prepared to hear whatever his petitioner might have to say: Then Angelo, weeping the while, began to speak in the following words:

"My father, I would have you understand that within the last few days I have received at Rome plenary absolution of my sins, which in sooth were well-nigh unpardonable, and although I was thereby almost restored to that state of innocence which I enjoyed when I received the water of holy baptism, nevertheless, as a farther atonement for my most execrable misdeeds, an additional task of penitence was put upon me, to wit, that I should set forth on a pilgrimage to San Giacomo di Compostella: Now, after I had duly got myself in order to embark on this journey, it chanced that yesterday morning I allowed myself to be drawn to listen to your most righteous discourse, whereupon the devil, who was peradventure greatly angered because I had wrested myself out of his hands, threw down before my feet a halter with which I might well hang myself by the neck. By halter I mean this satchel here which I now hold in my hand, and in which are contained at least five hundred ducats. And while he showed me this satchel, he showed me at the same time all the many cruel ills which afflict me through my poverty, and brought before my eyes the picture of my three daughters, now come to a marriageable age, and very beautiful withal, but clad in sordid rags. Moreover, by calling to mind all the possible ills and dangers which might well be their portion through the want of all things necessary, and by many other persuasions, I was incited to turn back to my home, and to enjoy together with my poor family the many good things which have been here sent to me by fortune. However, being armed and equipped with the stout shield of the Holy Spirit, I was enabled to resist these temptations, deeming that the greatest treasures earth can afford are as naught when put in comparison with a soul which God is willing to re-

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deem with the price of His most precious blood. Now, having brought myself to have recourse to you, having this resolve in my heart the while, I beg you, in God's name, that you will forthwith take charge of these moneys I have brought here, so that to-morrow, when you are preaching your sermon, you may declare this matter to the people assembled. If you shall do this, without doubt the owner of the satchel will be found, and then, when he shall have described to you by certain signs and tokens what may be within the same, you shall return it to him. Now, in case it should not seem just to you that I may with a good conscience take aught in the way of guerdon* thereanent from the owner, I implore you that of your kindness you will recommend my poverty to the good people of this city in such manner as may seem best to your fatherly kindness."

The illustrious saint, when he listened to the discourse of the suppliant thus tricked out in such plausible and sanctimonious wise, and when he saw how indeed there was money in the satchel as the pilgrim had said, gazed at him attentively in every feature, and, as the man seemed to him to be old in years and of an honest seeming, he not only gave undoubting credit to all the words he had just listened to, but he likewise said within himself that this thing must in sooth prove to be a miracle such as had never before been heard of, seeing that in the world as he saw it, marred and corrupted by wolfish avarice and insatiable greed of money, there should still be found a human spirit of such worth and excellence. Wherefore, after the saint had heaped upon the man before him many words of extraordinary praise in respect to the honest dealing he had practised, he said to him: "My son, I can find nothing more to say to you than to assure you that, if you had crucified Christ with your own hands, you would well deserve pardon therefor only by the merits of this righteous deed which you have wrought, without any further need of going on this pilgrimage. Nevertheless, I must hearten you on to follow the blessed path upon which your mind is set, and bid you be of good cheer, for assuredly God will not suffer this good deed of yours to pass away without its

* Orig., *pigliare alcun beveraggio.*

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reward. On my own part I will, as you will be able to see for yourself, do my duty to-morrow in such a fashion that, the mercy of my Creator aiding me, I hope you will soon have provided for you a more liberal aid for your poor estate—to say nothing of keeping a good conscience—than any which would have come to you through following the course which the accursed enemy of God had prepared for you in order the better to hurl you down into perdition." When the saint had finished speaking Angelo thanked him in unmeasured terms for his goodness, and more especially for the offer which he made of his willingness to address an appeal on his behalf to the people in church on the following morning. Then, having left in the hands of the saint the satchel full of ducats, he said to him: "My father, I beg that you will let me know in what manner I must bear myself, for I must tell you, not that I am minded to make a boast thereof, but merely to speak the truth, that I am, in spite of my present poverty, sprung from a noble stock, and it would go much against my will if it were to come to the knowledge of men how I have to go about begging for alms; wherefore, if it be possible, let this be kept secret," San Bernerdino, giving ready belief to these last words, which indeed only caused him to feel still greater compassion for the speaker, straightway commanded him that he should not quit the cell where he at present found himself.

And when the morrow had come, the saint according to his wont mounted into the pulpit, and having changed the text which he had already chosen for his sermon, he gave out another in these words, "Fecit mirabilia in vita sua: quis est iste, et laudabimus eum?" and then went on to say: "Fellow-citizens, seeing that a marvellous circumstance has lately come under my notice—something which, in its working, partakes assuredly more of the miraculous than of the human—it has seemed convenient to me to trespass somewhat on the set order of the sermon I had promised to deliver to you, and to place before you the text which you have just heard me repeat. Now the circumstance to which I have made reference is that a certain poor man, who was bound on a pilgrimage to San Giacoma di Compostella in order to cleanse him of his sins, happened

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to find himself on the morning of the day before yesterday in the midst of a great crowd, and, standing there, he turned over with his feet a purse which was lying on the ground filled full withinside with a sum of several hundred florins—a lure which had probably been placed there by the art of the devil. Now, on account of this occurrence he has been assailed by a vast multitude of temptations, and has had to wage a fierce war against the consciousness of his own extreme poverty and the thought of his family left behind him, for whom he can with difficulty provide food enough for their nutriment, and against the other numerous miseries which afflict him. But in the end, strengthened thereto by the love of Christ, he made the sign of the cross, and blew all these temptations aside and scattered them afar. Then, weeping bitterly the while, he came to me, bringing with him in his hand the satchel full of florins, which I still hold in my keeping. In truth I know not what more Saint Peter himself could have done, or even our own seraphic Saint Francis,* the one and only despiser of earthly riches, and thereby the imitator of Christ, in that he would not claim any earthly possession as his own. Could these have done anything more than, having found this treasure I speak of, have sought to restore it to its owner? How, therefore, can we give greater praise to this man, who, being altogether perplexed with worldly troubles, steeped in poverty, burdened with the care of daughters, and, beyond all, debarred by shame from seeking alms by begging from the fact that he is of noble birth, practises nevertheless virtue in such high degree that it seems to me the Church might most deservedly this day sing on his behalf alone the text in the words of which I now appeal to your charity, 'He has wrought wondrous things in his life.'"

And after this the saint began to declaim with a loud voice the following words: "And you, most rapacious of wolves, most greedy of misers, men of lust all defiled with the dregs of this deceitful world, every day you practise

* According to the "Golden Legend," the epithet "seraphic" was applied to Saint Francis because in the vision during which he received the stigmata the marks were imprinted on his body by a crucified seraph.

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usury and false contracts, and go after your ill-gotten gains: By your crafty dealing you keep as your own the goods of others, you rob the Church, you usurp the rights of the helpless, you drain the blood of the poor, you neglect to carry out the testaments with which you are charged, and in a thousand other most wicked deeds you go astray from the paths of Christ to follow those of the devil."

And thus the saintly old man, wrathful and burning ardently with the fires of love, having become somewhat awearied with much speaking, calmed himself, and having repeated the words of his text, went on to say: "I could never write down with my pen nor repeat with my tongue the words of praise which might most deservedly be applied to this man; nevertheless I would that you should here grasp the full meaning of one single instance of his goodness and purity of heart. He, when he was holding speech with me concerning this matter, made a great point of telling me that he willed not to ask for any guerdon in respect to the money which he had found, believing as he did that he could not with a good conscience accept the same. Wherefore now, my brethren, if the man who has lost this satchel be amongst you, let him come to me forthwith, and let him bring a description of the satchel and of the sum of the florins which are therein, and furthermore let him tell me exactly the number of coins of each separate impression, for you must know that they are already all divided the one sort from the other. If he shall do this, he may take the satchel and the blessing of God therewith, without having to disburse a single penny. Still I would not on this account cease from urging you to follow the teaching of Jesus our Redeemer, who has let us know it to be His will that, as every ill deed should be punished, albeit mercifully, so likewise no good deed should be allowed to pass by without its due reward. So it seems to me, my children, that this poor gentleman ought by right to have granted to him some reward in respect of the virtue he has shown in this matter; and, as I feel also that I am constrained in righteousness to commend his poverty to you, I pray that all those who are marked with the triumphant ensign of the cross of Christ will cast down upon this my cloak whatever alms God may inspire him

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to give, and let no one neglect to give his mite. For from the thousands of people I behold here before me, we shall surely collect a sum large enough to extricate him finally from his wretched condition, and to this good deed I exhort you, and I affirm that by it you will work greater weal than in lending aid to the needs of our hospitals, or in giving your alms to mendicants of any other sort whatever."

Having thus spoken, he threw his mantle down on the ground, and scarcely had it fallen before all the people, the greatest crowd that had ever been seen in that place, moved towards it, every man who was there reaching out the alms he desired to give in so holy a cause; and, in such fashion as I have described, the companions of San Bernardino during the whole of that day kept the mantle of the saint to receive the offerings which were made in answer to his request. By the time evening had come, it was found that they had collected a good sum of a thousand florins or thereabout.

Now while all this was being brought to pass, Il Vescovone had put on the disguise of a Genoese merchant, for the reason that he knew excellently well the idiom of that city, and now he came forward, and, crying and shouting aloud amongst the great crowd of people round about, he caused them to stand aside and make a passage for him. Then, having thrown himself weeping the while before the feet of the holy friar, he spake thus: "Sirs, these money are mine, and here or elsewhere I will give you a complete description of the stamps they may bear, for I have the same all written down here." So, taking from his breast the memorandum concerning the coins which he had kept there for this purpose, he gave it into the hands of the saint. San Bernardino, looking at him with a joyful smile, said: "My son, you have assuredly had more luck in finding your money than you had sense in keeping it safely. However, you shall come with me, and we will see whether the coins be yours or not. If they be yours, you shall have them back without the cost of a penny."

Thereupon the saint, after he had pronounced the benediction over the people, went into his cell, and having poured out the coins from the satchel, he found that they

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tallied exactly with the description given by Il Vescovone in his memorandum; wherefore he handed over the money with much satisfaction to the cheating knave. As soon as the latter had pocketed the same, he went as fast as he could to the place where the servants of Angelo were lodging, and, according to the plan which they had already devised between themselves, they all withdrew from Florence together and tarried for Messer Angelo at a given spot. And on the following morning there was handed over to Angelo the entire sum of money which had been collected, and this, in order to make the deception yet more complete, was, through the agency of the saint, converted into gold by certain bankers who were greatly devoted to him. Then Messer Angelo bestowed all the money about his person and took leave of the saint. returning to him many grateful words and receiving his benediction. He then went forthwith to the spot where his comrades were awaiting him; whereupon they all took their way to Pisa, holding high revel on the road, and having come there they made a friendly division of the booty between themselves, and then each one went his own way. From this we may easily believe that for the rest of their days they both went on living in jovial fashion at other men's cost.

MASUCCIO

ONE may say with truth that the jest which has been narrated in the foregoing story will seem quite as artfully constructed and diverting to its hearers as it was serviceable and full of profit to the knaves who carried it out, because, forsooth, it was such a fine trick that by it two common men were able to beguile not only a holy man of great experience, but likewise nearly all the citizens of Florence, who are of a very wily sort. Nor will you find any less laughable the story of another cheat which I am about to narrate to you, devised and carried out by two illiterate Roman fellows. This, albeit it was not of such serious moment as that which I have just told, may nevertheless be held to be in a certain sense more

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noteworthy, inasmuch as it was brought to pass in Bologna, a town to which nearly all the people in the world resort in order to buy their wit,* and from this place everyone assuredly might carry away a walletful, if, on departing therefrom, he did not leave too wide open the mouth of the wallet. But that this is the usage of the greater part of those who repair thither, is made manifest to us by the plainest signs.

* Orig. *dove quasi tutto il mondo manda a comparar senno.*

THE END OF THE SIXTEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Seventeenth

ARGUMENT

A DOCTOR OF LAWS SENDS HOME TO HIS HOUSE A CUP, AND IS WATCHED BY TWO THIEVES. ONE OF THESE TAKES A FISH TO THE DOCTOR'S WIFE, BRINGING HER AT THE SAME TIME A FEIGNED MESSAGE FROM HER HUSBAND, WHICH DIRECTS HER TO PREPARE THE FISH AND TO DELIVER UP THE CUP. THIS SHE GIVES TO THE ROGUE, AND WHEN THE HUSBAND COMES BACK HE FINDS HIS CUP GONE, AND HURRIES OFF TO RECOVER IT. THEN THE OTHER ROGUE GOES TO THE HOUSE AND SAYS THAT THE CUP HAS BEEN FOUND, AND THAT HE HAS COME FOR THE FISH. THE WIFE BELIEVES HIM AND GIVES HIM THE FISH, WHICH HE STRAIGHTWAY CARRIES OFF; AND, HAVING MET HIS FRIEND, THE TWO TOGETHER ENJOY THE TRICK AND THE GAINS THEREOF.

TO THE MOST REVEREND MONSIGNORE, THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS CARDINAL OF NAPLES.*

EXORDIUM

MOST reverend Monsignore, if it be that every claim of reason must urge and persuade those who may have given voluntary promises to their creditors to satisfy the same, I, seeing that I have made myself a debtor to your lordship's reverence by the offer of one of my novels, am forced not only by justice but by every

* Oliviero Carafa, of the house of Maddaloni. He was elevated to the archepiscopal see of Naples in 1458, and made a cardinal by Paul II. in 1467. It was under his patronage that Giovanni Pietro Carafa, afterwards Paul IV., went to Rome, and was made chamberlain to Alexander VI. He died in 1511, and was buried in the Cathedral of Naples, where there is a splendid tomb to his memory.

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becoming argument to carry out this promise of mine, and thus to discharge myself of my debt. Wherefore, in the account of the doings which follows, you will be told the story of a very diverting and audacious trick which was played by two Roman rogues at the expense of a very wise and learned doctor of laws in Bologna. This man, although he had taught an enormous number of students in what manner they should sell wisdom to other, nevertheless, knew not how to impart enough of the same to his wife to enable her, either in the first case or in the last, to defend herself against the frauds of these Romans aforesaid.

THE NARRATIVE

MESSER FLORIANO DA CASTEL SAN PIERO was known in his own day amongst the people of Bologna as a most famous and excellent doctor of laws; and he, after he had come out of church one morning, was walking up and down the great piazza of the city with certain other doctors of law, his friends, and in passing it chanced that he entered the shop of a silversmith living in those parts to whom he had given orders to make for him a rich and beautiful cup of silver gilt, and before he went any further, and without holding any other discourse with the silversmith thereanent, he made out his account with the craftsman and paid it. Then, when he turned round to call his servant and bid him take the cup home, he found that the varlet was not there; so he begged the silversmith that he would as a favour send the cup to his house by the hand of his apprentice, which thing the silversmith undertook willingly to do.

Now at that time there were in Bologna two young men from the Roman states, who had come from the parts round about Trevi. These two were wandering through Italy from one place to another, carrying with them a store of false money, and loaded dice, and a thousand other crafty beguilements wherewith to defraud whomsoever they

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might meet, contriving the while to eat and drink and live a merry life by sponging upon others.* Of these one was named Liello de Cecco and the other Andreuccio di Vallemontone; and these two, finding themselves by chance in the great piazza at that very same time when Messer Floriana had bidden the silversmith let despatch the cup to his house, forthwith proposed one to the other to make an attempt to get this cup into their hands when they heard what orders had been given about it. It happened that they knew quite well the house where the doctor lived; and as soon as they perceived that the apprentice had come back from the discharge of his errand, Liello straightway gave command to his companion as to what course they must follow. First he betook himself to a tavern, and, after he had bought a very fine lamprey from a heap of large ones which was lying there and hidden the same carefully beneath his mantle, he hurried at full speed to the house of Messer Floriano. Then, having knocked at the door, he asked for the mistress of the house, and when he had been brought into her presence he said: "Madonna, your husband sends you this fish, and bids me tell you to have it daintily prepared at once for the table, as he is minded to dine here to-day with certain other doctors who are friends of his; and, moreover, he told me that you were to send back to him the same cup which the apprentice of the Bear† brought to you a little time agone, for the reason that he finds he has made an unprofitable bargain with the master silversmith thereanent, and wishes to have it taken back to the shop in order that it may be weighed again."

The simple woman, lending easy belief to the knave's words, immediately handed over to Liello the cup, and commanded her maidservants to lose no time in letting prepare the fish; and, having duly set in order such apparel as was needful for the reception of strangers at dinner, she awaited their coming with no little pleasure. Liello, as soon as he had got the cup safely in his possession

* Orig., *mangiare e godere a spese del crocifisso.*

† Orig., *il garzone dell' Orso.* The silversmith must have used a bear for the sign of his shop.

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quickly made his way towards San Michele in Bosco,* where there dwelt a prior who was a Roman and a friend of the two sharpers, and an artist no less skilled in knavery than they themselves. This man gave Liello a friendly reception, and when he had heard the whole story, they both made merry over the good stroke which had been played, while they awaited the coming of Andreuccio, who had tarried behind in the piazza to listen to whatever might be said concerning the deed they had just wrought.

When the dinner hour had come Messer Floriano, having taken leave of his companions, went to his house, and as he drew nigh thereto, his wife, observing that he was alone, went towards him and said: "Messere, and where are the guests you have invited?" The doctor, greatly amazed at such a question as this, made answer to her, "What guests are these concerning whom you ask?" "Know you not what guests I mean?" said the wife. "I, for my part, have prepared everything for dinner in very handsome fashion." Messer Floriano, now more astonished than ever, cried out: "It seems to me that you must have lost your wits this morning." Then said the wife: "Nay, I am well assured that my wits fail me not at all. You, in sooth, sent me a fine lamprey with directions for me to get the same ready, seeing that you intended to bring hither with you several other doctors to dinner; and all the things you ordered me to do by your message I have done, and I hope these may be to your pleasure, otherwise we shall have lost our time and our trouble in no small measure." The husband replied: "Certes, my wife, I do not comprehend the meaning of what you are saying, but may God ever go on sending to us people who use us in this kindly fashion—people who bring us something out of their own store without taking away in turn aught from ours. This time, in sooth, we must have been mistaken for someone else."

Now when the wife, who with such scant caution had handed over the cup to the knave, heard that in truth her husband knew nothing at all about the matter, she said,

* San Michele in Bosco is an Olivetan monastery about a mile outside the gates of Bologna.

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with her mind greatly disturbed: "Messere, in my opinion it is exactly the opposite to what you say, forasmuch as the man who brought hither the fish asked me in your name to hand over to him the silver cup which the apprentice of the Bear had brought here only a short time before, and he described to me so exactly all the marks thereof that I handed it over to him forthwith." When Messer Floriano heard that the cup had thus been cozened away from him, he understood at once that he had lost it by means of treacherous dealing; wherefore he cried out: "Ah, senseless numskull that you are! You have in sooth allowed yourself to be nicely tricked." Then he departed straightway out of the house, and when he had come to the piazza he went searching about on every side without knowing why, demanding of everyone he met if any man had been seen going in the direction of his house and carrying in his hand a fish. In sooth, the doctor gave vent to a thousand other crazy humours without getting any good therefrom. He went from place to place playing the fool and sending people to the four winds, asking all sorts of questions bearing upon the business in hand, and sometimes trying to believe, with faint hope, that it was only a harmless trick which someone had played him.

In the meantime Andreuccio was standing at the corner of the piazza with all the outward seeming of a man of good repute, and although he deemed that by this time his comrade and the cup as well must have gained a harbour of refuge, he felt nevertheless no little vexation that he himself should have lost the good round sum he had spent in the purchase of the lamprey without ever tasting a mouthful of the same. Wherefore he made up his mind to get into his possession the lamprey by means of another trick no less astute than the first. Thus, taking advantage of the time when he perceived that Messer Floriano was most hotly engaged in his search for the cup, he betook himself at the top of his speed to the doctor's house, and mounting the steps with a joyful face he said to the wife: "Madonna, I bring to you good news, forasmuch as your husband has found the cup which certain friends of his caused to be stolen from him by way of playing a jest with him; therefore he has sent me hither

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to fetch the fish which you have got in order, and to take it to him, seeing that he is minded to make good cheer with the same in the company of those who snatched the cup out of his sight."

The wife, who had been overwhelmed with grief and trouble for the reason that she had been the cause of the loss of the cup, rejoiced mightily when she heard that it had been found, and having taken two large dishes of pewter, with a white and scented tablecloth, she placed the well-dressed fish withinside, and, glad at heart at the turn of affairs, she delivered it into the hands of the worthy Andreuccio. And he, as soon as he was clear of the house, wrapped up everything carefully under his cloak and flew as fast as his legs could carry him towards San Michele, and, having arrived there, he met the prior and Liello, and the three held high revel over the excellent lamprey, laughing and jesting the while heartily. They afterwards handed over the pewter dishes to the prior, and then, using the greatest cunning, they sold the cup and went their way to another place without raising any hue and cry with regard to their exploit.

Messer Floriano, who had spent the whole of the day in vainly seeking to get some intelligence as to the matter, went back to his house late at night hungry and sorely out of humour; whereupon his wife, going forward to meet him, addressed him in these words: "Glory be to God! seeing that by his help you have at last found the cup, through losing which I was called a numskull." But he, with a heart filled with cruel resentment, replied: "Get out of my sight, conceited fool that you are! if you do not wish to know what bad luck really is; for it appears that, over and beyond working a grievous wrong and injury to me by reason of your brutish folly, you now are minded to make a mock of me." The wife, utterly confounded by what she heard, answered, all trembling with fear: "Messere, in good sooth I do not mean to jeer at you;" and then she went on to tell him all about the second trick which had been put upon her. Messer Floriano when he heard this fell into a humour so overwrought and grief-stricken that he came little short of losing his wits entirely; and, after he had spent a great deal of time, and tried every

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scheme; with all sorts of most subtle investigations, to lay his hands on the thieves, he lived for a long season with his wife in sore hatred and ill-will, having failed altogether to discover anything about those who had duped him. And in this fashion the Romans enjoyed the fruit of their cunning deceit, and left the doctor, tricked and flouted, with his sorrow and loss.

MASUCCIO

ALTHOUGH, according to the novel which has just been related, the schemes employed by the cunning tricksters came to a successful issue, nobody will be able to deny that the said schemes were most dangerous and full of risk. And as it is a common saying in the mouths of men that the richest gains give rise to the greatest rejoicings, nevertheless it sometimes comes to pass that foxes are caught in the snare, and at the same time are mulcted both as to the loss and the profits as well. Wherefore I would the rather give my praise to those artists who know better how to work than to put their lives at stake for the sake of any trifling gain, and will gather an example from the friars of Saint Antony, who, when they set forth on one of their piratical excursions, put nothing on the table in the way of stakes except words, and never fail to draw therefrom so much profit that they always return to their homes safe and sound, and filled to the eyes with plunder. Of this saying the novel which follows next in order will give you clear and open testimony.

THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Eighteenth

ARGUMENT

A FRIAR OF SAINT ANTONY BY MEANS OF ENCHANTED ACORNS SAVES TWO PIGS FROM DYING, WHEREUPON THE WOMEN TO WHOM THEY BELONG GIVES HIM A PIECE OF LINEN CLOTH. THE HUSBAND COMES BACK, AND, BEING GREATLY ANGERED AT WHAT SHE HAD DONE, FOLLOWS THE FRIAR TO RECOVER FROM HIM THE LINEN. THE FRIAR SEES HIM COMING FROM AFAR, AND THROWS A LIGHTED BRAND INTO THE CLOTH, AND THEN GIVES IT BACK TO THE OWNER. THE FIRE BURNS THE CLOTH, AND ALL THE PEOPLE HOLD IT FOR CERTAIN THAT A MIRACLE MUST HAVE BEEN WROUGHT; SO THEY BRING THE FRIAR BACK TO THE FARM, WHERE HE COLLECTS A GOODLY QUANTITY OF CHATTELS.

TO THE EXCELLENT LORD ANTONIO DI SANSEVERINO,* THE ELDEST SON OF THE MOST SERENE PRINCE OF SALERNO

EXORDIUM

MY excellent and virtuous lord, until the time shall come when I may, with my meagre faulty lyre, endeavour to sound in my writings the praises of the abundant virtues which dwell in that youthful and noble mind of yours, in which they must needs find their most fitting abode, I have been wishing to send you this present laughable novel as an earnest. From reading it you may at least be able to learn, by way of caution, what vast numbers of pirates of different sorts go roving about

* He was the eldest son of Roberto di Sanseverino (see note p. 86), and inherited his father's dignities when he was a child in 1474. He married Costanza, the daughter of Federico di

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the world, and with what various tricks these fellows persuade each fool they may meet to fill their bellies with florins, and to look upon them as true saints. All these things will be made clear to you in a fashion that will divert you amain by the time you shall have come to the end of this novel. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

AS may be well known to everyone, it is a fact that a set of crafty and subtle knaves and charlatans* are at all times to be found going up and down in every part of Italy in the guise of fat, filthy friars of Saint Antony, making very sharp quest, and sweeping into their bags those votive offerings and gifts which may have been promised to their saints. Under pretext of this sort they roam about from one place to another, feigning to work miracles, and with such pretences, and with every other kind of crafty beguilement which they employ, they fill themselves amazingly well with money and with chattels of all sorts, and then go back to their houses, where they lead a life of idleness. Now of this kind of men there are more to be met every day in this kingdom of ours than in any other region, and in Calabria and Apulia they especially abound —provinces in which much almsgiving and little wisdom

Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. He was the leader of the conspiracy of the barons, and after its defeat he fled to Paris. In 1493 he was joined by the Count of Cajazzo, his kinsman of the bastard line, who was at that time in the service of Lodovico il Moro, and they were given high command by Charles VIII. in the invading army. Antonio led the attack on Recco, where the first blood was shed in the war. He recovered his estates, and rebelled a second time against Frederick. He fled and died in Sinigaglia, 1499.

* Orig., *gli Spoletani e Cerretani.* "Cerretano" is the common term for a knavish pedlar. The people of Spoleto seem to have been famed for their shrewdness. Another use of the term in this sense is in Bandello, Part I., Nov. 34: *Il Carenzone che era astutissimo e haverebbe fatta la salsa a gli Spoletini.* The Roman ciarlatani, according to Capponi, are the lineal descendants of the earliest mimes, who come from Atella, now S. Elpidio, near Naples—their name Ciarlatani being a corruption of Atellanæ.

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are to be found; wherefore these men are for ever making their way towards the districts aforesaid.*

It chanced that last year, in the month of January, there arrived in Cerignola a certain charlatan of this sort, riding on horseback and having in his train an ass laden with wallet bags and a manservant on foot. He went about collecting alms all through the country, making his horse to go down on his knees, and thus do reverence to the good knight Misser Saint Antony, according to the usage of this kind. When they had come one day into a certain village, it chanced that the fellow caught sight of two very fine pigs in front of the house of a rich farmer. The farmer himself was away from home, but his wife did not fail to give the friar an offering, and she did her alms, moreover, with a demeanour even more reverential than others were wont to use, whereupon he told himself straightway that he had here come upon soil which he might till to excellent purpose with his wonted implements. Therefore, putting on a look which seemed to tell that he was bursting with Christian charity, he turned towards his servant and whispered to him softly, but not so softly as to prevent the good woman from hearing what he said, and spake thus: "What a great pity and shame it is that such fine pigs as these must almost immediately die a sudden death!" The woman, who had stretched out her ears at the sound of these words, then said: "Missere, what is it that you are saying about these pigs of mine?" To this the friar answered: "In sooth I was saying naught else concerning them than to remark that it seemed to be a great failing of Nature's handiwork that such fine pigs as these should have to die in a few hours' time, without letting you draw aught of profit therefrom." Whereupon the woman, whose heart was wrung with grief at hearing this news, said: "Alas, man of God! I beg you that you will have a care to let me know by what working, such a curse may have fallen upon them, and whether we can by any means find a remedy therefor." The friar replied, "My good

* Calabria was proverbilaly the stupid province of Italy. In Novel IV. Fra Girolamo and his confederate go there with their arm of Saint Luke: *e fra loro conchiuso di andarsene in Calabria, provincia da grossa e incolta gente abitata.*

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woman, I can tell you naught else as to the causes and the reasons of this thing. I only know that, by certain signs which I observe about them, it is bound to come to pass —signs which no living person could recognize except friars of our order, who enjoy the grace and favour of our good knight, Misser Saint Antony. I indeed should be able to find a remedy for them easily enough, had I only with me a few of our enchanted acorns."* Then said the woman: "Oh, see, for the love of God! whether you may not have one of the same about you, for I will pay you a very high price therefor."

The friar, when he heard these words, turned towards his servant, a fellow very well instructed in all tricks of this sort, and said: "Martino, look and see inside our saddle-bags, and search whether we have not therein two or three of these acorns, which I kept back for that ass of ours which so frequently falls sick in the same fashion. If you should find any, let us of our generosity give the same to this poor woman, in order that she may not lose these fine pigs through want of a remedy; then, I am well assured, she will not show herself so ungrateful as to forget that we have a hospital, or to refuse us the gift of a small quantity of linen sheets for the service of our poor sick people." In answer to this the woman said: "For the love of the cross of Christ save these poor pigs of mine from such an evil fate, and I will give you in return a quantity of new and fine linen, out of which you may make not one but two pairs of sheets for your hospital."

Then the friar forthwith contrived that Martino should hand over to him some acorns of the kind aforesaid, and having made him likewise bring a vessel of water, the friar put therein the acorns together with a good quantity of bran,† and, after he had mixed all the contents well together and had said a number of prayers over the mess, he placed it before the pigs, who straightway set themselves to devour the whole of it as if they had been famished. Then the friar, turning towards the woman, said:

* This practice of the friar is strictly in accordance with tradition, Saint Antony being the protector of animals, and of pigs especially.

† Orig., *caniglia* or *canenglia*.

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"Now, in sooth, you may rest assured that these beasts of yours will be safely delivered from the cruel death which they were bound to suffer, and if it should still please you to bear in mind the benefit which we have worked on your behalf, will you of your kindness hand over to me at once the reward, for I wish to depart forthwith and to go my way with God's blessing?"

Now this hurry on the part of the friar was caused by fear lest the husband should return and bid him take his hands off the prey he hoped to snatch. But the woman with the greatest willingness made haste to give him the linen she had promised him, and he, as soon as he had received the same and had duly stored it away, mounted his horse forthwith and rode away from the farm, taking the road which led to Tre Santi, with the view of journeying afterwards into Manfredonia, a region wherein he found every year the best of pasturage. Not long after the friar had taken his departure the farmer came back to his house from working in the fields. His wife at once went out to meet him with a joyful countenance, and told him the news how his pigs had been delivered from a sudden death by the marvellous virtue of the enchanted acorns of Saint Antony, and went on to say how she had given to the good friar some linen cloth for the hospital in remembrance of the poor and as a reward for the great benefit he had done on their behalf.

The husband, although he was mightily pleased to hear that his pigs had been delivered from the great danger which had threatened them, was nevertheless vexed and angry beyond measure when he learned that the piece of linen had changed owners, and, if he had not been held back therefrom by the great haste which drove him on to get hold of his property, he would of a surety have given his wife a good basting over the back with a stout oak sapling. So, in order that he might without delay set about that part of the business which called for more immediate attention, he asked his wife, without saying anything further about the linen, how long time had elapsed since the friar had taken his leave, and in which direction he had gone. To this the wife made answer that he had not departed thence a quarter of an hour, and that he had taken

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the road leading to Tre Santi. The wary farmer gathered together six others, young fellows and well armed, and in their company he set forth, following without delay in the friar's wake. They had scarcely gone a mile when they caught sight of him from afar, and then they straightway began to throw out to him a lure, calling upon him with a loud voice to await their coming, forbearing not the while to advance towards him.

The friar, turning round at the sound of their shouting, and marking how the clamorous band was drawing anigh him, immediately divined what must be the reason of their coming; whereupon, assisted at this juncture by his wonted craft and foresight, he immediately bade Martino hand over to him the linen cloth. Then, having put this in front of him on the saddle-bow, and turned his back towards his adversaries, he took the steel and dexterously struck a light and kindled therewith a piece of tinder. As soon as he heard that his pursuers were now almost upon him, he carefully put the lighted tinder withinside the folds of the linen, and then, turning himself towards those who had by this time come up to him, he said: "What would you with me, my worthy men?" The farmer, when he heard these words, came forward and said: "Vile, cowardly knave that you are, I have in sooth a good mind to run this partisan through the middle of your body. Were you not ashamed to make your way into my house, and by means of your lying cheat, to rob my wife of a piece of linen? May a curse fall upon you* for what you have done.'!

At these words the friar, without making any reply thereto, threw the linen into the farmer's arms and said: "My good man, I trust God will pardon you. I did not get this linen from your good wife by robbery; on the other hand, she gave it to me of her own free will for the use and benefit of the poor folk we have in our hospital; but here, take the linen, in God's name. I hope, more-

* Orig., *da la quale che vermicane ti nasca. Vermocane* is literally a creeping ulcer, and is sometimes used for a vine canker, but its chief use in the novelists seems to be as an imprecation. In Sacchetti, Nov. 4, *mo li nasca il vermocane*, and in 140, *che vermocane e questo*. Bandello, Part II., Novel 1, uses it in a vulgar and blasphemous sense: *Tu dici il vero al Corpo del Vermo Can.*

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over, that our good knight, Misser Saint Antony, may in a very short space of time let you be witness of a miracle about which there can be no doubt, that he may rain down his fire not only into the folds of this linen, but likewise upon all the rest of your chattels." But the farmer, when once he had got the linen safely into his hands, felt very little concern about any of the curses or the hocus pocus of the friar, and straightway took the road back to his house. Scarcely, however, had he gone a stone's throw on his homeward way when he began to be conscious of a smell of burning and to see smoke rising from the linen, and those who were with him smelled and saw the same things. Thereupon the farmer, being seized with a fear more terrible than any he had ever known, immediately threw the linen down upon the ground, and then, having opened the folds thereof, found that it was all ablaze. Being now altogether overcome with fear, and terrified beyond measure lest some worse evil might befall him, he called aloud upon the friar, and besought him that, for the love of God, he would turn back and offer up a prayer to his miraculous Saint Antony, so that the cruel doom which had so quickly fallen upon him might be revoked.

Then the friar, who was in no wise anxious that the cloth should be consumed entirely, went back forthwith, and, without allowing them to spend any great time in supplicating his grace, gave orders to Martino to let quench the flames, and threw himself down upon the ground, making believe to pray devoutly with many feigned tears the while. Having done this, he gave the farmer good assurance that he need have no farther fears for his property on account of the fault he had committed, and then went back with the company to the farm.

As soon as the news of this manifest and undoubted miracle which the friar had worked became known in those parts, all the people round about, men and women, and even the young children, went running towards him crying aloud for mercy, so that on his entry into the village he was greeted with a reception no less glorious than that which Christ met when He rode into Jerusalem. And the gifts and offerings which were made to him were so abundant that ten sumpter asses would not have sufficed

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to carry them away; wherefore the friar, after he had converted the better part of the goods he had received into hard cash, went on his way rich and rejoicing, and took no farther care to return and fill his wallets.

MASUCCIO

THAT the arts by which all living men make it their study to gather for themselves rich spoil, without vexing their bodies with labour therefor, are very numerous and varied, the three novels which I have last told to you will give you clear demonstration. These tricks may likewise be said with truth to have been very laughable, and carried out with much astuteness and subtle ingenuity. However, the one which I propose to tell in the next place will be found no less diverting, and so much the more laughable since those who took part in it made great profit without using any device or labour thereanent, and with little or no travail of mind.

THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Nineteenth

ARGUMENT

TWO MEN OF LA CAVA JOURNEY TO NAPLES. ONE OF THEM, BEING WEARY, HALTS AT LA TORRE, AND THE OTHER ARRIVES LATE AT NIGHT AT PONTE RICCIARDO, AND LIES THERE. ANOTHER MAN, AN AMALFITAN, PASSES THAT WAY DURING THE NIGHT, ONE WHO IS MIGHTILY IN FEAR OF MEN WHO HAVE BEEN EXECUTED, AND SHOUTS TO A CORPSE HANGING ON A GIBBET; WHEREUPON THE MAN OF LA CAVA, DEEMING THAT IT IS HIS COMRADE WHO CALLS, RUNS TOWARDS HIM. THE AMALFITAN THINKS HE IS BEING GREETED BY THE HANGED MAN, AND TAKES TO FLIGHT, FOLLOWED BY THE OTHER. HE LIKEWISE FLINGS AWAY A BAG HE IS CARRYING, AND THIS THE MAN OF LA CAVA PICKS UP, AND THEN, HAVING BEEN JOINED BY HIS COMPANION, THEY RETURN HOME.

TO THE VIRTUOUS AND MAGNIFICENT MISSERE BERNARDO DE ROGIERI.*

EXORDIUM

SEEING that in this my task of novel-telling I desire to keep in remembrance my most perfect friends, and to engrave in deep characters their names on this little work of mine, to serve as a lasting remembrance, I feel myself constrained by this obligation, before I may go any farther, to call back to memory the name of such a rare and perfect friend as yourself, and to dedicate to you this little novel, made up of very laughable matter, which I have lately finished. In reading this, over and above its diverting humour, you will be able to study the breeding and descent of the men of La Cava—who, in sooth, are

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to "Messer Sestilio Aurelio Aliprando, reale armigero."

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almost like our own compatriots—in such complete fashion that you, who are their present most discreet Podestà and Rector, may be able to give a valid judgment as to whether those who are now under your charge have in any way gone aside from treading in the footsteps of their predecessors.*

THE NARRATIVE

LA CAVA, a most ancient and very loyal town, which has in recent days, as is well known to everyone, attained in some measure to a noble status, has always been most plentifully supplied with master-masons and workers in pavement of exceptional merit. In these handicrafts they achieved such a mastery that they gathered together great stores of wealth in ready money and in household chattels and in landed estates, so that it was always held that of all the dwellers in this our kingdom there would be found none so rich as were those of La Cava.

Wherefore, if the sons had been wise enough to follow in the footsteps of their fathers, and had gone on without swerving after the manner of their ancestors of old time they would never have been reduced to that extreme and immeasurable poverty which now afflicts them. But perhaps the younger men, looking down upon the riches which had been gathered together by so laborious a handicraft, and regarding them merely as transitory gifts of fortune which can lead to nothing, have given themselves up to follow virtue and nobility, as the only things which change not and last for ever; and for this reason some have settled to become our new legists and doctors and notaries, others men at-arms, and others cavaliers. Be that as it may, you cannot now enter a house of that sort, wherein formerly you would have found nought else but implements

* Signor Settembrini remarks in a note that the people of Salerno and of Amalfi and of La Cava have always been in the habit of playing jokes one with another, and that the La Cavans as a rule get the better of the others.

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of the pavior's or the mason's trade, without finding there, instead of these tools, stirrups and spurs and gilt sword-belts lying around on every side. Which one of the two courses it would better have profited them to avoid and which to follow, I leave to be decided, not merely by you yourself, but by all those others who, having no other concern with them except to read this story, may be disposed to give a righteous judgment concerning the same.

Now I, following the course of my story, go on to say that in the days when the famous master Onofrio de Jordano undertook the task of the marvellous building of the Castello Novo,* the greater part of the master-builders and workmen of La Cava betook themselves to Naples to work at the building aforesaid, and amongst the others there were two young fellows from the hamlet of Priato, who, attracted no less by their anxiety to see Naples (where they had never been hitherto) than by the desire to earn money, set out on their way on a certain Sunday morning in the wake of one of the master-builders mentioned before. And it happened that as they went thus on their way in the company of a number of other men of La Cava, that these two young fellows, who were not used to the fatigue of a long march, were left some distance behind the others, following the track of those who were in advance. And for the reason that they were ignorant of the way, they wearied themselves so greatly that it was very late when they arrived at last at Torre del Greco, and there one of them, who was very much more awearied than his comrade, proposed that he should tarry for the night. Whereupon the other took heart, and, thinking that he might perchance be able to overtake his companions, took to the road again and set out walking with the utmost speed he could put forth, but in the end his strength did not prevail to take him farther than a certain point between Torre del Greco and Naples before he was overtaken by the darkness of the night.

By this time he began to regret mightily that he had not remained with his companion, but he still kept walk-

* The Castello Novo was begun in 1283 by Charles I. of Anjou, from a design supposed to be from the hand of Giovanni da Pisa. Alfonso the Magnanimous added the five round

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ing on, and, without knowing where he was, arrived at the Dritto of the Ponte Ricciardo.* When he caught sight of the walls and the doors thereof he imagined forthwith that it must be a house of entertainment; so, overcome with weariness and desiring to take shelter from a fine rain which was falling at the time, he drew near to it and began to knock at the door with a stone. After having knocked for some time without bringing anyone to open to him, he straightway made a virtue of necessity,† and stretched himself at full length on the ground, and found a resting-place for his head against the door, having made up his mind to remain there until the morning, when his comrade would pass thereby. Having thus settled himself, a light sleep soon came over him.

Now it chanced that on that selfsame morning there had likewise set forth from Amalfi a certain poor little tailor, carrying on his shoulders a sackful of doublets which he had made and was minded to sell on the following morning in the market at Naples; and he, like the young man of La Cava, had also been overtaken by fatigue and by nightfall when he had travelled as far as Torre del Greco, and had tarried there to rest over the night, having purposed in his mind to set forth betimes in the morning, so as to arrive at the place of sale at an hour which might let him have a good chance to dispose of his poor wares at a profit. As luck would have it, he woke from sleep when it was but little past midnight, and, deceived by the exceeding brightness of the light of the moon, he thought it must be near daybreak, and at once set out on his journey. He walked on and on without halting and without marking any sign of the coming of the dawn, and at last began to traverse the gravel pits which lie just beyond the monastery of the Orti, and by the time

towers in 1442, and this work is probably the one alluded to. The triumphal arch in his honour is from the design of Pietro di Martino.

* Now the Ponte della Maddalena, crossing the Sebeto between Naples and Portici. The Dritto was probably the house of the collector of dues, *e. g.*, *Dritto, per tassa o Dazio che di dovuto si paga al pubblico.*

† Orig., *convertito il bisogno in pazienza.*

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he had gone so far he plainly heard the friars singing their matins,* and for this reason he became aware that a good portion of the night had yet to elapse. At this moment by chance there flashed across his brain the thought of the malefactors who had been hanged upon the Ponte Ricciardo, and, because he came from Amalfi, where men are known to be timorous by nature and faint-hearted, he began to be mightily afraid, and picking his way with loitering steps he did not dare to go far forward, and at the same time had a horrible dread of turning back on his path.

And being thus bewildered and filled with fear (for it seemed to him with every step he went that one or other of the hanged corpses must be on his traces), he came close to the spot the thought of which had smitten him with such dire terror. Then, when he had come right face to face with the gallows, and marked that not one of the criminals hanging thereon stirred at all; it seemed to him that he had by this time left behind him the most pressing part of the danger; wherefore, to rouse up some of the bravery which was within his breast, he cried: "Aha, master gallows-bird! will you go with me to Naples?" The young man from La Cava, who had slept but little during the night and very badly, when at first heard the sound of the approaching footsteps thought that they must be those of his companion, and then when he heard a voice inviting him to go on to Naples he felt quite certain that it must be as he had imagined, and promptly made answer to the invitation: "Here I am; I will soon be with you."

When the Amalfitan heard this answer given to his speech he became straightway possessed with the belief that it was the corpse of the man hanging on the gallows which had spoken, and on this account he fell into such a gruesome fit of terror that he ran no light risk of falling down dead on the spot. However, when he turned round and looked back and saw that a certain one was coming towards him, it did not appear to him that the time was a meet one for halting; wherefore, having flung away the pack which he was carrying, he began to flee at the top of his speed towards La Maddalena, crying out without ceas-

* About 3 a.m.

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ing in a loud voice as he went, "Jesu! Jesu!" The man of La Cava, when he heard these cries and marked how rapidly the other was fleeing, at once deemed that he must be attacked by some others; so he straightway followed him as quickly as he could go, also shouting at the top of his voice and saying: "Here I am; I am coming to you. Wait for me, and do not be afraid." These words only served to strike still greater terror into the heart of the fugitive. After following him some distance the La Cavan saw lying upon the ground the pack of wares which the other had thrown away, whereupon he forthwith picked up the same. When he had estimated the value of the excellent goods therein, knowing at the same time that his companion had no such pack in his possession, he was well assured that the man who had fled at his approach could not possibly be his friend; wherefore, troubling himself no farther about the fellow, he made his way back to the spot where he had spent the night in no very comfortable fashion, bearing with him the booty he had captured. Then he stretched himself out once more to rest, and waited there so that at the coming of the day he might go on his way to Naples, either in the company of his friend or of some other.

In the meantime the Amalfitan, uttering the most horrible cries and sobbings, arrived at the Taverne del Ponte, and when he had come opposite to the same the collectors of the city dues, demanded to know of him what might be the reason of the clamour he was making, and to them he answered and affirmed it to be the truth that he had just seen the corpse of a man who had been hanged separate itself from the gallows, and give chase to him, pursuing him as far as the brink of the river. To this tale they all of them gave full belief, and, terrified no less than the fellow himself, they took hold of him and drew him into the house. Then, having carefully closed and locked all the doors and duly signed themselves with the sign of the cross, they did not issue forth again until it was broad daylight.

Now the other man from La Cava, who had remained behind for the night at La Torre, together with another wayfarer, also a townsman of the aforesaid place, arrived

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at the Dritto by the Ponte Ricciardo when the day had broken and it was quite light. The first man, who was still tarrying there, when he heard the sound of their voices knew who they were, and having gone to meet them he told them the whole story of his adventure. Whereupon his companion, who was well versed in all the ways of the country round about, perceived forthwith how the affair might have come to pass, and, so as not to let slip the booty which was inside the sack, they determined amongst themselves to go back straightway to their homes by the way of Somma.* This plan they duly carried out, and, when they had divided the plunder amongst themselves, they set out once more for Naples after a little time.

In the course of a few days the story of what had happened was spread by report through all the country, and it was told as a sure and certain fact how the corpses of the men who had been hanged were wont to give chase to any solitary wayfarer who might chance to cross the Ponte Ricciardo, each one who repeated the tale compounding many and divers fresh fables thereanent. By reason of this it came to pass that there was to be found no peasant who would go by that spot before daylight without first having signed both his beast and himself with the sign of the cross. Thus, with this and with divers other precautions the common people hereafter took their way through this perilous region.

MASUCCIO

VARIED, indeed, and strange are the terrors which the presence of the dead is wont to give to the living, a thing which we may see clearly for ourselves every day that passes. And it will happen now and again to some men who may be travelling by night, that, being assailed by an access of fear, they will see all the objects around them so indistinctly, and in such fashion

* Somma lies on the north side of Vesuvius. The travellers could make a long detour by this road, but would meet none of their townsfolk on the way to Naples.

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that they judge one thing to be another, and, working afterwards upon this foundation, they compound a mass of the strangest and most marvellous fables that ever man heard—an instance of which the past novel has given us a sample. This one, in sooth, has let come back into my memory the thought that I ought in the next place to write concerning another form of fear, differing from the story I have just told, inasmuch as the timorous man, being spurred on by the ardent flames of love, went of his own free will in quest of fear; from which adventure there followed many noteworthy pleasantries, as will be declared to you in the coming discourse.

THE END OF THE NINETEENTH NOVEL.

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Novel the Twentieth

ARGUMENT

GIACOMO PINTO IS ENAMOURED OF A CERTAIN WIDOW LADY, WHEREUPON MISSER ANGELO GIVES HIM A PROMISE THAT HE WILL LET HIM HAVE POSSESSION OF HER BY THE WORKING OF NECROMANCY. HE TAKES GIACOMO, WHO FULLY BELIEVES THIS TALE, TO HOLD CONVERSE WITH BARABBAS, AND LIKEWISE GIVES HIM CERTAIN ANIMALS AS OFFERINGS. BUT GIACOMO TAKES TO FLIGHT THROUGH FEAR IN THE END. THE NATURE OF THE CHEAT COMES TO LIGHT, AND GIACOMO GOES TO THE WARS, WHEREIN HE SERVES FOR PAY, AND COMES BACK THEREFROM A WISE MAN AND A RICH.

TO THE GOODLY JOAN FRANCISCO CARACCIOLO*

EXORDIUM

KNOWING full well the high merits of your wit, my most worthy Joan Francisco, I can readily bring myself to believe that you will not fail to understand how many and how mighty are the difficulties which the man must needs encounter who sets himself to investigate the powers of Love, our mighty lord; and how, through his working, it continually happens that the witless become wise, and discreet men become fools; the bold are turned into cowards, and the timid into men of mettle. And over and beyond this, Love, acting belike as the doomsman of fortune, leads the rich down to the lowest pit of misery, and sometimes restores the poor to a prosperous estate. And because it does not seem to me that I need in any way give to you, who have been instant in your service to mighty Love from your very earliest youth, any fresh intelligence concerning his rule, or to tell

* This may be the same as the Duke of Melfi, to whom the forty-eighth novel is dedicated.

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you how often it has chanced that men and women—wise and prudent though they be—have let themselves rush headlong to inflict a bitter and cruel death upon themselves with their own hands when scorched by the flame of their burning passion, I will only at this present moment set before you a fresh instance of his power, brought to pass in the case of a certain noble fellow-citizen of ours—one, indeed, not very richly endowed either with wit or courage—who, having been transfixed by love, became forthwith a man of the highest prudence, and acquired a degree of courage such as is scarcely to be looked for in a human soul. As a consequence of this, though he was a very poor man, he found an opportunity of enriching himself, and being freed from his many misfortunes, to lead a pleasant life in happy wise. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

NOT many years have passed since there lived in Salerno a youth of noble and ancient lineage, who was called by name Giacomo Pinto. He, although he sprang from the Seggio di Porta Nova, a district which is commonly reckoned to be the school of good sense in our city, would have found a dwelling more fitting and agreeable to his condition in the mountain regions of our land, whence, according to what men say, the greater part of our ancient families derive their origin. Now this young man, albeit his purse was ill garnished and his brain not overcharged with wit, was nevertheless endowed with the spirit of a gentleman, which led him to become enamoured of a certain widow lady, still young and very fair, and mother-in-law* to the governor of our city. It chanced that he had never before this been in love; wherefore he began to set about his wooing in such crafty wise that there was not a child in all Salerno who was not advised thereof, and on every side, and in every place where ladies and gentlemen were wont to foregather, they discoursed concerning the same in marvellously pleasant

* Masuccio writes *suocera; possibly suora is meant.*

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strain, everyone framing jests thereanent. But he, being pierced by a dart which he had never felt before, took little or no heed of their jesting, and pursued, albeit with no success, the emprise he had begun, inflamed the while by the strongest passion.

Amongst the other young men of the quarter in which he dwelt who were wont every day to go gathering up some fresh matter of diversion from the follies he committed, was a certain one named Loisi Pagano. He, being a man of great talents, a pleasant companion, and of the finest manners, soon won the complete confidence of poor Giacomo, so that the latter would frequently discourse with him concerning the passion which was consuming him. Loisi, becoming every day more fully acquainted with the wanderings of Giacomo's brain, was seized with the notion that he might, by turning to mischievous jest the humours of his lovesick friend, bring to bear by means of these a sound chastisement upon a certain rascal, another Gonnella,* albeit he was a Salernitan. This fellow, who took to himself the name of Misser Angelo, had never yet been punished as was his due for the cheats and juggling tricks he had been wont to put in practice all his life. Though he was nothing better than a farrier, he would go running about all parts of Italy, now in the character of a physician and now in that of a merchant, and would ofttimes return home with a pocketful of money.

It chanced one day that while Loisi was holding converse with Giacomo on the wonted topic, he addressed the lover in these words: "My Giacomo, you must in sooth feel little or naught of discomfort by reason of your amorous pains, and have no wish to have done with the same, seeing that you might so easily put an end to them all. You know well that Misser Angelo is the most mighty and potent necromancer now alive on the earth; in good sooth I myself can bear you worthy testimony of this, seeing that in many adventures which I have taken up I have

* Gonnella seems to have been a professional buffoon at the court of the Marchese Niccolo d'Este. Sacchetti makes frequent mention of him, generally bringing in his name to let finish a pun, Gonnella meaning a gown. Bandello also names him. His "Book of Jests" was printed in 1506.

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brought the same to a successful issue by reason of his aid. Moreover, this man is a natural kinsman of yours on the side of your mother. Why do you not betake yourself to him, and, plying him well with flattering words, beg him to exercise his art on your behalf, so that this affair of yours may come to a prosperous issue? As far as this matter is concerned, you will assuredly be fully satisfied with the result, supposing that Misser Angelo should be willing to help you. But, on the other hand, if it should happen that he should show himself minded to add to you the score of those others whom he may possibly have duped in the past, see that you lay hands upon him in such fashion that for the future he may never scheme how to put a trick upon a gentleman without calling you to his memory."

Giacomo, when he heard these words, was mightily glad of heart thereanent, and gave to his companion unbounded thanks. In sooth, he was half persuaded that everything he desired was already accomplished, and declared that he would not fail to do everything which had been commanded. Then Loisi, after he had laid bare his project with considerable trouble, went as fast as his legs could carry him to find Misser Angelo, and, overjoyed the while, gave him a full account of the trap which he proposed that they two, working together, should duly set in the course of the next few days. Misser Angelo, rejoicing greatly over this new prey thus delivered into his hands, and recking naught that Loisi was to the full as desirous that he should get his hide well basted as that a trick should be put upon Giacomo, did not quit the company of his new comrade until they had duly set the affair in order and come to an agreement as to when and how it should be carried out by them.

Not many days after this, Giacomo sent for Misser Angelo, and, almost choked with tears, laid bare to him the secret of his amorous passion, which was already known at the four corners of the market-place, and then spake to him thus: "Good kinsman, in our need those who are in truth our friends offer their help. I have just lately heard that you yourself are a great necromancer; wherefore I doubt not at all that by the help of your knowledge

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you will be able, supposing that you are disposed that way, to extricate me from all my troubles. So, in the name of God, I beseech you that it may be your good pleasure to set about the satisfying of my need in such fashion that I may be able to tell all men that I have not only got possession of the lady through your help, but that, along with her, I have received from yon my very life as a gift."

Hereupon Misser Angelo spake with a friendly face, and made answer that he, on his part, was fully equipped with everything he would need for the complete execution of the service which was demanded of him, and, passing on from one subject of talk to another, he said at last, "My Giacomo, I do not fully know whether you are to be trusted in this affair, seeing that what you will have to endure will require the most dauntless courage to face." Then answered Giacomo, "But how can such a thing be? I would have you know that I am ready to go to the depths of hell itself, so much has love fired my spirit for this enterprise." Misser Angelo answered him and said: "But then a worse thing than this must needs be done, forasmuch as it will be necessary for you to go and speak face to face with a very fierce demon whose name is Barabbas, a demon whom I alone have power to make subject to my will." Then answered Giacomo, "If it be your will, and if necessity demands, I will hold speech with Satan himself, who assuredly is the greater." "Well, may God grant that it shall be as you say!" replied the necromancer; "but tell me how are we to furnish ourselves with the other implements which are necessary for the despatch of our business? To begin, we must have a sword with which a man has been slain." Giacomo hastened to answer, "Oh, I have a sword, one belonging to my brother, which has been the death of ten men or more." Then said Misser Angelo, "Since we have got this, we have got the thing which seems to me the hardest to come by; everything else we may need we shall find without difficulty. Nevertheless, see that you have in readiness, at the time when I shall require them of you, a black wether of good size, and four capons well fattened. For the rest, you must wait patiently till the moon shall be on the

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wane, and leave all else to be done by me. I, in sooth, will deliver the spoil into your clutches, and you may make of her your mistress or your wife, whichever you list."

Giacomo, almost out of his wits for joy at the offer of such service as this, made answer that he would duly set himself to work to get everything in readiness according to the directions laid upon him. Misser Angelo then left him and went straightway in search of Loisi, to whom he set forth a complete account of the instructions he had given to Giacomo, in order that there might arise between himself and Loisi no misunderstanding as to the business, and they frequently came together, before the day came when they should set to work, rejoicing mightily the while upon the task they had in hand. When a few days had passed, during which time Giacomo never ceased importuning Misser Angelo to make a beginning, the necromancer said one day, "Good kinsman, I on my part have all things in readiness; now have you sought out everything I directed you to provide?" "In sooth I have," replied Giacomo, "and in this case fortune has assuredly been kind to me, forasmuch as my sister-in-law chanced to have just now some of the finest capons in the world, and out of these I have made them bring four of the best. And, besides this, I have happened, by a very strange chance, to come upon a wether as big as a bull and as black as night, and, as he has got four horns on his head, he is indeed a thing of terror to behold." Misser Angelo, mightily pleased at what he heard, then answered, "Kinsman, since the last few days you seem to have become quite another man; it appears, indeed, that Love has sharpened your wits in such marvellous wise that you might well go teaching sea-crabs the art of arithmetic.* What man besides yourself would have known how to get in readiness so many things and in so short a time? Now I, for my part, will set you in the way we have laid out, and this very night I will come to fetch you."

Misser Angelo then left Giacomo and went to settle with Loisi how he should await their coming at the place already determined between them when he should be assured that the appointed hour had struck. As soon as night

* Orig., *che insegnereste l' abaco ai granchi.*

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had fallen, he went to Giacomo's house and said to him, "Shall we set forth, forasmuch as the time is now come?" "Certainly, Misser Angelo," replied the lover. And thus Misser Angelo, when the man-slaying sword had been handed over to him, and when he had hoisted the wether on his shoulder and hung a pair of the capons on his arm, led the way towards a spot where stood divers ruined houses, in one of which was already concealed Loisi, who had brought thither with him certain other gentlemen so that he might not enjoy such fine sport without letting others share it. When they had come to the place, Misser Angelo, turning towards Giacomo, said, "Good kinsman, you must understand that we are now come to such a point in this affair that we cannot turn round and retreat without the gravest danger to ourselves; therefore see that your courage fail not. And I must not refrain from exhorting you at all times, that however dreadful may be the things you see or hear, you will never utter the name of God or of the Virgin, or even make the sign of the cross, for if you do we shall all of us be hurled forthwith into the jaws of Lucifer. If, indeed, you should feel some qualms of fear, such as are wont to creep over men in cases like these, then you may commend yourself to the burden which the ass in Egypt bore upon his back, which burden was the Holy Mother and her Son, your Redeemer, and by these means we may, peradventure, deceive this one accursed of God."

In answer to this speech Giacomo promised that he would well observe everything which had been arranged. "Come now," said the necromancer, "and take care that you repeat after me every word which you hear me say; and, as soon as we shall have conjured up Barabbas, and you have heard him cry out, 'Give me the things with tails,' you shall at once throw to him the capons. Likewise you shall throw him the wether as soon as he cries out for the thing with horns." All these directions Giacomo promised most willingly to carry out, and Misser Angelo, having fully given his orders, drew forth the sword and made a great circle on the ground, inscribing also certain mystic characters therein. Then, by means of some fire which he had brought with him for the purpose,

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and certain boxes of fetid gums, he made a horrible smell, and making believe to mutter his incantations with strange movements of his head and his mouth, of his hands and his feet, he said to Giacomo: "Now put your left foot within the circle, and tell me truly which of these two things you would prefer: to see him here close before you in all his horrible deformity, or to hear him speak from that house over there?"

The poor young fellow, who, showing no little courage the while, had been led thus far by love and by his own simple nature, when he saw that the beginning of the sport promised to be of a very fearsome character, began now to feel somewhat of dread and horror, and gave answer to the magician and said that it would suffice him in the meantime to hear the demon speak. Then he put forward one of his feet within the circle, and, shaking with fear from head to foot, clean forgot all about the Jerusalem-ass and called upon every saint in Heaven for succour without leaving out the name of a single one. The necromancer, perceiving by this time that the lover was persuaded they were transported into another world, said to him, "Now call three times for Barabbas." Whereupon Giacomo, fearing lest something worse should happen to him, called out the name for the first time. Loisi, who was garbed in the disguise of a devil, here made a blaze of fire, and then let follow the noise of an explosion terrible enough in sooth to have stricken fear into the breast of the bravest man you can think of. It is not for us to inquire whether or not Giacomo may have wished himself safe at home; in any case, he, being nerved to the deed by Misser Angelo, called out the name of Barabbas a second time; whereupon Loisi, in the character of the devil let blaze up a greater fire than before and frightened the poor wight more than ever.

Misser Angelo, although he failed not to perceive that the little wretch was half dead, did not give over urging him to keep his heart up and to say to him: "Have no fear, good kinsman, for we have bound him in such fashion that he will not be able to do you mischief of any sort or kind; therefore now call upon him the third time." Giacomo, however, in obeying the direction made his invoca-

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tion greatly against his will, and spoke so faintly and his voice trembled so that his words could only be heard with difficulty. Then Loisi cast forth his third thunderbolt, and made such a horrible screeching that it wanted little more to let poor Giacomo fall to earth a dead man. Said Misser Angelo: "Stand firm and do not fear, for he is our captive. Besides this, you must know that through me you must work the conjuration; wherefore I bid you give out in a loud voice the words which I shall tell you under my breath." Then, having concocted a conjuration of his own, he once more bade Giacomo take courage, and urged him on to recite the same; whereupon Giacomo, as soon as he made ready to open his mouth, felt his teeth chatter mightily and his legs quake in such wise that he could not maintain himself upright on his feet. In sooth, in such piteous case did he show himself to be, that Misser Angelo began to fear whether the poor wretch might not die of alarm, and, perceiving that they had at least let the affair go far enough this time, he himself began to invoke Barabbas.

In the meantime Loisi and his companions were half dead with laughing over the fool's play, and as soon as they perceived that the disposition of things which had been settled by Misser Angelo was not like to go on to its appointed issue, they, in order not to be tricked out of their sport by Misser Angelo, cried out, yelling fiercely: "Give me now the things with tails and the thing with horns." Then said the necromancer: "Throw him at once everything you have, and take to your heels the quickest you can, and, as you do not wish to be struck dead on the spot, do not turn to look behind you." Giacomo, who indeed fancied by this time that he was in the infernal world, was pleased amain to hear these words, and having flung the capons and the black wether into the ruined house, he gave his legs such free play that not even the Barbary horses who are victors in the races could have kept pace with him.

Giacomo having got back to his house, Misser Angelo after a short space of time made his appearance there, and said to him: "Well, good kinsman, what think you now of my skill as a necromancer? Keep a good heart,

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however, and the next time we will carry out our intention to the full." Then answered Giacomo: "Nay, I would rather that those who wish me ill should go there, for I would not go back thither were I to gain the empire thereby; and on this account, good kinsman, see and use your best efforts to bring my desire to pass by some other method. Then I shall be beholden to you in an eternal obligation." Misser Angelo answered: "So let it be, in God's name! I will go back to my house at once to consider the cure of your passion, so that you may in the end be thoroughly satisfied with what I shall do on your behalf." And after treating Giacomo to many other cozening speeches he went his way to his home.

Now Loisi, having taken possession of the animals which had been offered to him as a precious oblation, and bidden farewell to his companions, went home to get some rest. And when the morrow came he gave orders to his servants that they should, with the provisions aforesaid and with divers other good things, get ready a sumptuous repast to which he might bid Giacomo, and, besides him, certain of his friends who were privy to the affair. When they were seated at the banquet it seemed that not a single one of them could contain his laughter, and, going beyond this even, they all began to cry out, "Barabbas! Barabbas!" and to utter gibes of all sorts and of such a nature that Giacomo straightway perceived how he was being mocked and flouted by every one of his convives. Whereupon Loisi, taking note of what he saw, determined that the moment had now come when his original and foreordained project might be put in execution, meaning thereby that the trickster should be punished on account of his cheating in the past by the hands of his victim.

Therefore, as soon as the banquet was finished, Loisi called Giacomo and recounted to him in friendly wise, in the presence of a good number of the compony, in what fashion Misser Angelo had contrived to befool him: whereupon Giacomo, keeping well in mind the chief purport of Loisi's words, believing entirely in the truth thereof and with his mind filled with a deadly purpose, started off at once at the top of his speed in search of the pretended magician. Having found him, without uttering a word

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concerning aught else, he seized him by the hair of the head and, having cast him down upon the ground, he set to work to beat him in such savage fashion, and with such a shower of blows and kicks, that it was a marvel how the man attacked could endure them. And for the reason that his blood became mightily heated over his work, he caught up a stone with which, if he had not been seized and bound by the hands, with no small difficulty, by the crowd which assembled, he would assuredly have treated Misser Angelo in a way which would have put an end to all his knavish tricks for the future.

When he had shaken off the fit of rage which had thus taken hold of him, and had become conscious of all the follies he had committed, he was overcome with so great shame thereanent that he no longer felt he had the heart to sally forth from his abode, and on this account he made up his mind to depart from the city for good. Wherefore having sold a little farm of his which was all the property he possessed, he bought with the proceeds thereof a horse and arms, and then took his way to the wars in certain regions beyond our borders, where, by the favour of fortune and by his own vigour and valiant deeds, he acquired a great sum of money in a short space of time, being reputed likewise a famous man-at-arms and marvellously wise and prudent. And, seeing that Love and Misser Angelo together were the cause of all this good luck, and that one of them received just payment for his deeds at the hands of Giacomo, it now only remains for us to ratify for ourselves the truth of the words we spoke in the beginning, to wit, one may well say that wonderful, incomprehensible, and miraculous is the power of the quiver-bearing god. How happy are they upon whom he and fortune look with smiling faces!

MASUCCIO

I HAVE heard it said by many people at many different times that when a man's wit becomes enfeebled, and he, on this account, is found an easier prey to tricksters, he will often set to work to take revenge at one

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stroke, and thus punish the cheater and get satisfaction for the cheat at the same time; without taking farther thought of the matter, he will fall to the use of violence, and will make the one who may have beguiled him smart well therefor. And a certain portion of the foregoing novel will let us see that the saying I have alluded to is a true one; forasmuch as we may notice that Misser Angelo, being well advised of the slender wit of the headstrong lover Giacomo, used all his art to put a trick upon the silly fellow, but the latter, as soon as he perceived in what fashion he was being used, not being well enough endowed with cunning to pay Misser Angelo back in his own coin, or to return more than he had received, at once flew to violent means. This, in sooth, he did in such a manner that, if the succour had delayed ever so little, he would assuredly have despatched the necromancer to keep company with Barabbas.

Now, seeing that in this second part of my work which has just come to an end, I have told you enough of the accidents and the potency of love, of many singular and laughable tricks and jests, and of divers other fresh and strange occurrences, I think that it is now my duty to turn my pen to other themes, and, as I puzzle my brains in settling which target I shall now shoot at with my arrows, the fact recurs to my memory that when I began to set down in writing what I knew about those sham professors of religion, I was annoyed in cruel fashion by the complaints and reproaches of certain would-be wise, lawyer-like women; and, although at the time I gave back to them an adequate reply to all their stupid chattering, still I made myself their debtor by giving them a promise that, before I should have come to the end of this work of mine, I would not fail to let the world have full intelligence concerning their faulty and most imperfect sex, adding thereto somewhat by telling of the innate corruption, the treachery, and the wickedness of the greater number of them. And, seeing that I am now minded to acquit myself of this debt, there has come up in procession before me so many perfidies, so much unheard-of baseness, so many deeds more fiendish than human, which have been wrought by the many lawless, unbridled, and

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wicked women in the world, that I was almost persuaded to refrain my steps from the path I had proposed to tread. Nevertheless, feeling myself more potently urged on by the sense of justice than held back by vexatious or hostile speech, I am induced, albeit somewhat disgusted with my task, to set down here some of the failings which come to women by nature.

HERE ENDS THE SECOND PART.

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